

Recollections of Idealism

[Wiedererrinerter Idealismus]

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Part One

A Semantic Sonata in Kant and Hegel

Chapter One

Norms, Selves, and Concepts

I. Introduction

1. In the first three chapters I consider some of the ideas that animated the philosophical tradition, anchored and epitomized by Kant and Hegel, which they called ‘idealism.’ My aim is to reanimate some of those ideas, breathing new life into them by exhibiting a new perspective from which they show up as worthy of our interest and attention today. I do that by retrospectively rationally reconstructing a coherent, cumulative trajectory of thought, carving it out of the context in which it is embedded, ruthlessly ignoring elements near and dear to Kant and Hegel that are not essential to the line of thought on which I am focusing. This will seem to some a perverse sort of enterprise. At the end of Chapter Three I assemble conceptual raw materials drawn from all three chapters, in order to address the methodological issue of how to think about the nature, justification, and possible value of this sort of undertaking.

II. Problems with Early Modern Semantics

2. At the heart of Descartes’ innovations in epistemology and the philosophy of mind lies a revolutionary semantic idea. He saw that the rising new science required giving up the old ways of thinking about the relations between appearance and reality. Since the Greeks, the idea had been that, at least when things go well, the way things appear to us *resembles* the way they really

are. Resemblance in this sense is a matter of sharing properties (or some more general sort of form), as a realistic picture shares some elements of shape and perhaps color with what it pictures. But on Copernicus's account, the reality behind the appearance of a stationary Earth and a revolving Sun is a rotating Earth and stationary Sun. No resemblance there. And Galileo's reading of what he calls the "book of nature, written in the language of mathematics" finds the best way of getting a grip on the reality of motion to be by manipulating geometrical appearances, in which a period of time shows up as the length of a line, and acceleration as the area of triangle. The category of resemblance is of little help in understanding the connections that are being exploited. And in Descartes' own algebraized geometry, the equations of lines and circles do not at all resemble the geometrical figures about which they let us reason so effectively. Descartes sees that a more abstract notion of representation is needed. We've been worrying about it ever since.¹

For Descartes, the way discursive algebraic equations represent geometrical figures serves as a paradigm of representational relations generally, and in particular of the relation between appearance and reality—between the concept-manipulating mind and the geometrical Galilean world of extended things in motion that mind thinks about by representing it. What makes it possible to use algebraic formulae to reason about geometrical objects—the phenomenon I am claiming provided Descartes with his semantic paradigm—is the *global isomorphism* between the two systems. One can, if one likes, still think of a formula and the figure it represents as sharing something or being alike in some way. But what they share must be thought about in terms of the role each plays in the *system* of which it is a part: the structure-

¹ John Haugeland tells this story well, in the opening chapter of his *Artificial Intelligence: The Very Idea* [MIT Press, 1989]. On Kant's early rejection of resemblance in favor of representation, see his *Dissertation* [§4, Ak. II, 385-393].

preserving way in which a formula's relations to other formulae can be mapped onto a figure's relations to other figures. Apart from those horizontal relations between representings and other representings, the vertical semantic relations between representings and representeds are invisible and unintelligible. This holistic character of the new notion of representation was not lost on Spinoza, for whom thought of the world is possible only because "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas," nor on Leibniz, who required each monad to represent its whole universe in order to represent any of it.²

3. Where Descartes' semantic concerns center on the nature of representational *success*, Kant addresses more fundamental questions about the nature of representational *purport*. What is it, he wants to know, for our ideas so much as to *seem* to be about something? What is it for us to take or treat them as, for them to show up to us as, representings, in the sense of something that answers for its correctness to what thereby counts as being represented?³ This issue is the core around which cluster the other elements of Kant's concern with what he calls "objectivity." The line of thought he develops to answer these questions begins with the identification of a critical shortcoming of the account of judgment he inherited. That account finds its place as part of the traditional *classificatory theory of consciousness*. This is the idea that to be aware of something is to take it *as* something: paradigmatically, to classify something particular as being of some general kind. In its form as a theory of judgment, it becomes the view that judging is *predicating* one concept of another: putting two concepts into a relation, marked by a copula,

² I discuss some of the details of their holistic accounts of representation in Chapters Four and Five of *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Chapters in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* [Harvard University Press, 2002].

³ Already in the letter to Herz of 1772, Kant says:

I noticed that I still lacked something essential, something that in my long metaphysical studies I, as well as others, had failed to pay attention to and that, in fact, constitutes the key to the whole secret of hitherto still obscure metaphysics. I asked myself: What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call 'representation' to the object?

whose paradigm once again is bringing a particular concept under a general one, or subordinating a less general to a more general one.

In a radical break with the whole of the logical tradition he inherited, Kant rejects this way of thinking about judgment. The reason he gives is that it does not apply to logically compound judgments:

I have never been able to accept the interpretation which logicians give of judgment in general. It is, they declare, the representation of a relation between two concepts... (W)hat is defective in this interpretation... (is) that it applies only to categorical, not to hypothetical and disjunctive judgments (the two latter containing a relation not of concepts but of judgments), an oversight from which many troublesome consequences have followed. [*CPR* B140-1]

It will be instructive to fill in some of those “troublesome consequences.” The same logical tradition distinguishes between mental *acts* and their *contents*—that is, between the two sides of what Sellars calls the “notorious ‘ing’/‘ed’ ambiguity,” which affects concepts such as judgment, representation, experience, and perception—between what one is *doing* in judging, representing, experiencing, or perceiving, on the one hand, and what is judged, represented, experienced, or perceived, on the other. Sensitivity to that distinction should prompt the question whether understanding judgment as consisting in predication or the relation of two concepts is intended to address the activity of judging or the propositional contents of such acts. It is in the context of that question that the invocation of the sorts of compound judgment that populate Kant’s Table of Judgments—negative, hypothetical, disjunctive, and modal judgments—makes most visible the inadequacy of the traditional way of thinking about judgment.

For it then becomes clear that in the traditional theory, the notion of predication is being asked to do two incompatible jobs. On the one hand, it serves as a structural way of building up new judgeable contents. On the other hand, it is thought of as a kind of doing that has the significance of endorsing such contents. The collision between these two senses in which predication is an ‘operation’ is clearest when one thinks about judgeable contents appearing as unasserted (unendorsed) components of more complex sentences (judgments). The conditional is a paradigm. When I assert “If *Pa* then *Pb*,” I have *not* asserted *Pa*. Have I predicated *P* of *a*? If so, then predication does not amount to endorsement: predicating is not judging. If not, then it looks as though there is an equivocation when I detach from the conditional, reasoning:

If *Pa* then *Pb*

Pa

So: *Pb*

For the second premise *is* a predication, and the antecedent of the first premise is *not* a predication.

Geach picks up this Kant-Frege point, using it in his masterful, gem-like essay “Ascriptivism,” to argue against emotivist semantic analyses of terms of moral evaluation.⁴ His target is theories that understand the normative significance of terms such as ‘good’ not as part of the *content* of what is said about an act, not as specifying a characteristic that is being attributed, but rather as marking the *force* of the speech act. Calling something good is thought of as *doing* something distinctive: commending. Geach first asks what the limits of this ploy are. He points to the lovely archaic English verb “to macarize”, which means to characterize someone as happy.

⁴ The Philosophical Review, Vol. 69, No. 2, 221-225. Apr., 1960.

Does the possibility of understanding calling someone happy as macarizing her mean that happiness is not a property being invoked in specifying the content of the claim that someone is happy, because in saying that we are really *doing* something else, namely performing the special speech act of macarizing? If we can do that with ‘happy’, why not with ‘mass’ or ‘red’? What are the rules of this game? He then suggests the embedding test: look to see if an expression can be used to construct a judgeable content that is *not* directly used to perform a speech act, paradigmatically in the antecedent of a conditional. Because imperatival force *is* grammatically marked, we cannot say:

*“If shut the door, then....”

But we *can* say things like “If he is happy, then I am glad,” and “If that is a good thing to do, then you have reason to do it.” In the first of these, I have *not* macarized anyone, and in the second, I have not commended any action. So the terms ‘good’ and ‘happy’ contribute to the specification of content, and are not to be understood as mere force indicators. (I called this essay “masterful” and “gem-like.” Geach exhibits a deep fault-line in an entire philosophical approach, nails down his point, and leaves it at that. The essay is five pages long.⁵)

Worrying about compound forms of judgment containing unendorsed judgeable contents as components required Kant to distinguish the operations by which such contents are constructed from the activity of endorsing the results of those operations. Further, once we see that the doctrine of judgment as predication is trying to have things both ways, and that no single ‘operation’ can be taken both to form contents and to be the adoption of an attitude towards those

⁵ Of course this argument does not make it forever impossible to pursue emotivist-expressivist theories. It just obliges those who do to have something to say about embedded uses as well as free-standing ones. Addressing just this issue is what marks the divide between classical expressivists such as C.L. Stevenson, and the more sophisticated generation of neo-expressivists epitomized by Allen Gibbard and Simon Blackburn.

contents, the need to deal with compound judgements shows that predication is inadequate for *both* purposes. Endorsing hypothetical (conditional) judgeable contents is not happily thought of as predicating, and those contents are not happily thought of as formed by predication.⁶

III. Kant's Most Basic Idea

4. For this reason, Kant could not take over the traditional classificatory theory of consciousness, which depends on understanding judging as predicating. But what can go in its place? Here is perhaps Kant's deepest and most original idea, the axis around which I see all of his thought as revolving. What distinguishes judging and intentional doing from the activities of non-sapient creatures is not that they involve some special sort of mental processes, but that they are things knowers and agents are in a distinctive way *responsible* for. Judging and acting involve *commitments*. They are *endorsements*, exercises of *authority*. Responsibility, commitment, endorsement, authority—these are all *normative* notions. Judgments and actions make knowers and agents liable to characteristic kinds of *normative* assessment. Kant's most basic idea is that minded creatures are to be distinguished from un-minded ones not by a matter-of-fact ontological distinction (the presence of mind-stuff), but by a normative *deontological* one. This is his *normative characterization* of the mental.

Drawing on a jurisprudential tradition that includes Grotius, Pufendorf, and Crusius, Kant talks about norms in the form of *rules*. Judging and acting—endorsing claims and maxims,

⁶ At this point some (even Frege himself, briefly) have been tempted to think of judging as predicating *truth* of a sentence—at the cost of seeing the *same* predicate as involved in all judgments. But sentences formed by applying "...is true" to a sentence can also appear as the antecedents of conditionals, and the same question arises: In asserting such a conditional, has one "predicated" truth of the sentence that appears in the antecedent?

committing ourselves as to what is or shall be true—is binding ourselves by norms. It is making ourselves subject to assessment according to rules that articulate the *contents* of those commitments. Those norms, those rules, he calls ‘concepts’. In a strict sense, all a Kantian subject can do *is* apply concepts, either theoretically, in judging, or practically, in acting. Discursive, that is to say, concept-mongering creatures, are normative creatures—creatures who live, and move, and have their being in a normative space.

It follows that the most urgent philosophical task is to understand the nature of this normativity, the bindingness or validity (*Verbindlichkeit, Gültigkeit*) of conceptual norms. For Descartes, the question was how to think about our grip on our concepts, thoughts, or ideas (Is it clear? Is it distinct?). For Kant the question is rather how to understand their grip on us: the conditions of the intelligibility of our being bound by conceptual norms.

5. This master idea has some of Kant’s most characteristic innovations as relatively immediate consequences. The logical tradition that understood judging as predicating did so as part of an order of semantic explanation that starts with concepts or terms, particular and general, advances on that basis to an understanding of judgments (judgeables) as applications of general to particular terms, and builds on that basis an account of inferences or consequences, construed syllogistically in terms of the sort of predication or classification exhibited by the judgments that appear as premises and conclusions. In a radical break with this tradition, Kant takes the whole judgment to be the conceptually and explanatorily basic unit at once of meaning, cognition, awareness, and experience.⁷ Concepts and their contents are to be understood only in terms of the contribution they make to judgments: concepts are functions of judgment. Why? Kant

⁷ As we might say, judgment is for Kant the *Ur-teil* of discourse.

adopts this order of semantic explanation because judgments are the minimal units of *responsibility*—the smallest semantic items that can express *commitments*. The semantic primacy of the propositional is a consequence of the central role he accords to the *normative* significance of our conceptually articulated doings. In Frege this thought shows up as the claim that judgeable contents are the smallest units to which pragmatic force can attach: paradigmatically, assertional force. In the later Wittgenstein, it shows up as the claim that sentences are the smallest linguistic units with which one can make a move in the language game.

Understanding judging in normative terms, as undertaking a distinctive kind of responsibility, is also responsible for the most general features of Kant's account of the *form* of judgment. The subjective form of judgment is the 'I think', which, we are told, can accompany all our judgments, and so, in its pure formality, is the emptiest of all representations. Thought of in terms of the normative pragmatics of judgment, it is the mark of *who* is responsible for the judgment. (A corresponding point applies to the endorsement of practical maxims.) It indicates the relation of a judging to the "original synthetic unity of apperception" to which it belongs. I will say something more soon about the use Kant makes of this central concept. But the idea behind it is that the sorting of endorsements into co-responsibility classes is a basic condition of the normative significance of commitments. Committing myself to the animal being a fox, or to driving you to the airport tomorrow morning normatively preclude *me* from committing myself to its being a rabbit, or to *my* sleeping in tomorrow (in the sense that I cannot be entitled to such commitments), but they do not in the same way constrain the commitments *others* might undertake.

The objective form of judgment, Kant says, is “the object=X” to which judgments always, by their very form as judgments, make implicit reference. Thought of in terms of the normative pragmatics of judgment, it is the mark of what one has made oneself responsible *to* by making a judgment. It expresses the objectivity of judgments, in the sense of their having intentional objects: what they purport to represent. The understanding of the intentional directedness of judgments—the fact that they *represent* or are *about* something—is through-and-through a *normative* one. What the judgment is about is the object that determines the *correctness* of the commitment one has undertaken by endorsing it. (On the practical side, it is normative assessments of the *success* of an action for which the object to which one has made oneself responsible by endorsing a maxim must be addressed.) In endorsing a judgment one has made oneself liable to distinctive kinds of normative assessment. What one is thinking and talking *about* is what plays a special role, exercises a special sort of *authority* in such assessments. Representing something, talking *about* or thinking *of* it, is acknowledging its semantic *authority* over the correctness of the commitments one is making in judging. Representational *purport* is a normative phenomenon. As we shall see, representational *content* is to be understood in terms of it.

IV. The Normative Pragmatics of Judgment and the Nature of Judgeable Contents

6. Besides *who* is responsible for a judging, and what that judging is responsible *to*, there are two other elements a normative pragmatics of judgment should address:

- What is it that one makes oneself responsible *for* by judging?

and

- What is it that one is *doing* in making oneself responsible, committing oneself, endorsing?

The first is a question of how to understand judgeable *contents*. The second is the challenge to fill in the bare-bones picture of judging as a normative doing, the alteration of one's normative status, the undertaking of some sort of responsibility. This is the key issue, for it is in terms of the answer to this question that we will have to understand both dimensions of content—what one makes oneself responsible *for* in judging, and what one makes oneself responsible *to*—as well as the nature of the subject of those responsibilities. Here, I think, we get Kant's next big idea.

That is that the responsibility one undertakes in judging (and there is a parallel story about endorsing a practical maxim) is generically a kind of *task* responsibility: the responsibility to *do* something. Specifically, it is the responsibility to *integrate* the judgment into a *unity of apperception*. Synthesizing a unity of apperception is the activity that provides the background and the context in which episodes can have the significance of judgments. Engaging in that activity produces, sustains, and develops a synthetic unity of apperception: a *self* or *subject*. What must one do to be doing that? One must *integrate* new endorsements into the whole that comprises one's previous endorsements. Synthesis by successive integration can be thought of as involving three sorts of activity: critical, ampliative, and justificatory. One's *critical* responsibility is to weed out materially incompatible commitments.⁸ This means rejecting

⁸ My talk here and in what follows of “material” relations of incompatibility and inferential consequence is adapted from Sellars's usage. It refers to inferential and incompatibility relations that hold in virtue of what is expressed by *non-logical* vocabulary. Thus claiming that Pittsburgh is West of New York City has as a material inferential consequence that New York City is East of Pittsburgh, and is materially incompatible with the claim that Pittsburgh

candidate judgments that are incompatible with what one is already committed to and responsible for, or relinquishing the offending prior commitments. Judgers as such are obliged to renounce commitment to contents that are *incompatible* with their other commitments, or which have such commitments as their consequences. For if two commitments are incompatible, each serves as a reason to give up the other.

One's *ampliative* responsibility is to extract the material inferential consequences of each commitment, including new ones, in the context of the auxiliary hypotheses and collateral premises provided by the rest of one's commitments. Each commitment gives one reason to accept others, which one ought to accept in the sense that one has already implicitly committed oneself to them by acknowledging the commitment from which they follow. One's *justificatory* responsibility is to be prepared to offer reasons for the commitments (both theoretical and practical) that one acknowledges, by citing prior commitments (or undertaking further commitments) that inferentially entitle one to those new commitments. Seeking to fulfill the first sort of responsibility is aiming at a whole constellation of commitments that is *consistent*. Seeking to fulfill the second is aiming at one that is *complete*. And seeking to fulfill the third is aiming at a constellation of commitments that is *warranted*. (Perhaps it will be clear at this point how it is that Kant can take it that the systematic obligations of philosophers are merely the explicit form of the very same obligations that are implicitly incumbent on rational knower and agents as such.)

is a prime number. I discuss this idea further in Chapter One of *Articulating Reasons* [Harvard University Press, 2000].

What is produced, sustained, and developed by practically acknowledging these critical, ampliative, and justificatory integrative task responsibilities is a *unity* precisely in the sense of being governed by, subject to assessment according to, those norms of integration. It is a *synthetic* unity in that it is produced by the activity of synthesis that is integrating disparate commitments into such a unity.⁹ It is an *original* synthetic unity of *apperception* because what makes an act or episode a *judging* in the first place is just its being subject to the normative demand that it be integrated into such a systematically unified whole¹⁰, and awareness in the sense of apperception (a matter of sapience, rather than mere sentience) is judgment (apperceiving is judging).¹¹ Kant also, tellingly, calls the product of this synthetic activity a *transcendental* unity of apperception. It is transcendental in that it is that in terms of which we must understand the relation to objects—representation—which is an essential dimension of the *content* of judgments. The key to Kant’s account of representation is to be found in the story about how representational purport is to be understood in terms of the activity of synthesizing an original unity of apperception, as I have described it so far. It will help to approach that story in stages.

⁹ This is not the only sort of “combination” that Kant calls “synthesis” (cf. B130-1). But the claim that this is the basic species is an important element of the reading I am offering. Cf. the claim at A79/B104:

The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition; and this unity, in its most general expression, we entitle the pure concept of the understanding. The same understanding, through the same operations by which in concepts, by means of analytical unity, it produced the logical form of a judgment, also introduces a transcendental content into its representations, by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general.

(I have said—and will here say—nothing about the move from unifying judgments into an original synthetic unity of apperception to the unification of concepts and intuitions in judgments.)

¹⁰ This is what I take to be the idea behind Kant’s apparently awkward claim that representations must both already “stand under” a synthetic unity and “be brought under” it by the activity of synthesis:

I am conscious to myself *a priori* of a necessary synthesis of representations—to be entitled the original synthetic unity of apperception—under which all representations that are given to me must stand, but under which they have also first to be brought by means of a synthesis. [CPR B135]

¹¹ [T]hat act of understanding by which the manifold of given representations... is brought under one apperception, is the logical function of judgment. [CPR B143]

7. So far I have attributed to Kant two positive moves in response to his principled rejection of traditional accounts of judgment as predication:

- understanding the activity of judging in *normative* terms, as the undertaking of a kind of responsibility or commitment; and
- understanding that kind of responsibility as a *task*-responsibility, a commitment to *do* something, namely to integrate the judgeable content one endorses into a synthetic unity of apperception.

In light of the justificatory, ampliative, and critical dimensions of that practical synthetic-integrative responsibility, another way of putting this last point is that what one is responsible for is having *reasons* for one's endorsements, using the contents one endorses *as* reasons for and against the endorsement of other contents, and taking into account possible *countervailing* reasons. And that is to say that as *normative* creatures, we are *rational* creatures—not in the sense that we always or even generally think or act as we have reason to, or that we usually have good reasons for thinking and doing what we do, but in the sense that whether we do or not, we are always liable to normative *assessment* concerning our reasons for thinking as we do or doing what we do. However *sensitive* we are in fact on any particular occasion to the normative force of reasons (that peculiar force, at once compulsory and yet not always compelling, that so fascinated and puzzled the ancient Greek philosophers), we are the kind of creatures we are—knowers and agents, creatures whose world is structured by the *commitments* and *responsibilities* we undertake—only because we are always liable to normative assessments of our *reasons*.

The norms that articulate the contents of judgments are *concepts*. The conceptual faculty, the understanding, is the faculty of judgment. Concepts articulate the contents of judgments by determining what one would make oneself responsible for, what one would be committing oneself to, were one to endorse those contents. Kant thinks of concepts as a kind of *rule*. What are they rules for doing? They are rules for synthesizing a unity of apperception. And that is to say that they are rules articulating what is a *reason* for what. The concepts being applied determine what *follows* from a given claim(able), hence what (else) one would have committed oneself to or made oneself responsible for by endorsing it. They determine what counts as rational *evidence for* or against, or *justification of* a judgeable content, hence would count as a *reason for* or against endorsing it.

The task of integrating a judgment (or practical maxim) into a synthetic unity of apperception has determinate conditions of success and failure only insofar as the judgments have contents that stand in relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility to one another. A knower can have a determinate *critical* integrative task-responsibility only if it is settled which judgeable contents are materially incompatible with which others, so that endorsing some provides good reasons to reject others. And a knower can have a determinate *ampliative* or *justificatory* integrative task-responsibility only if it is settled which judgments inferentially commit or entitle one to which others, and so provide good reasons for accepting those further judgments. The concepts applied in judging articulate the content of the judgment (the judgeable *content* one becomes responsible *for*) by specifying the material inferential and incompatibility relations that content stands in to other such contents. For that is what settles what one is responsible for *doing* in making the judgment. Conceptual content in that sense

provides the details of the synthetic-integrative responsibility one is undertaking thereby. Here the paired notions of a judgeable content and of being responsible for such a content in the sense of endorsing or committing oneself to it, are being made sense of in terms of a basic kind of task-responsibility: being responsible for *doing* something (namely integrating the judgment into a normative unity of apperception).

Kant's ideas about the act or activity of *judging* settle how he must understand the content *judged*. In conditioning the semantic account of *content* on the pragmatic account of *force* (in Frege's sense)—the way the story about what is *endorsed* is shaped by the story about what *endorsing* is—Kant exhibits a kind of methodological *pragmatism*. In this sense, that pragmatism consists not in the explanatory privileging of *practical* discursive activity over *theoretical* discursive activity, but in the explanatory privileging of *act* over *content*, within *both* the theoretical and the practical domains. Kant's explanatory privileging of the *activity* of synthesizing a unity of apperception would reverberate through subsequent German Idealism, and be embraced and exploited in particular by Fichte and Hegel.

8. The argumentative and explanatory structure I have been indicating as guiding and working out (in a pragmatist spirit) Kant's master idea of the fundamentally *normative* character of judging is a way of thinking about the relations between four things:

- 1) What one must *do* in order in the relevant sense to be taking responsibility for or committing oneself to a judgeable content (or practical maxim). This is engaging in the activity of *synthesizing* an original unity of apperception, by *integrating* the content in question into the whole that comprises all of one's

commitments in the light of the relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility they stand in to one another.

- 2) What one creates, sustains, and develops by doing that: the constellation of commitments that is an original synthetic unity of apperception (OSUA).
- 3) The elements of that synthetic unity, what one takes responsibility *for* or commits oneself to. These are the judgeable contents that are integrated into the OSUA.
- 4) What one thereby makes oneself responsible *to*. These are the *objects* that one comes to *represent*, in the sense of making oneself answerable (*for* the correctness of the endorsed judgeable contents that make up the OSUA) *to* objects, which one in that normative sense thereby counts as thinking (talking, judging) *about*. It is because of this dimension of conceptual contentfulness that the synthetic unity of apperception deserves to count as a *transcendental* unity of apperception. For in Kant's usage, *transcendental* logic differs from *general* logic in addressing the *content*, and not just the *form* of judgments, in the sense of their representation of, or reference (in the sense of normative answerability) to, *objects*.

This list amounts to an order of explanation. The strategy is to make sense of each of these elements in terms of those that precede it. Because the kind of normative *unity* distinctive of the synthetic unity of apperception must be understood in terms of the synthetic-integrative *activity* that produces it, the cognitive-practical subject or self that is identified with a synthetic unity of apperception is not happily thought of using the traditional category of substance. It is

the moving, living constellation of its “affections”, that is, of the concomitant commitments that compose and articulate it. The significance of each of the component commitments that contingently and temporarily are included in a particular synthetic unity of apperception depends holistically on its rational consequential and incompatibility relations to its fellows. This reciprocal dependence of the whole and its parts, together with the dynamic character of such relational structures as sustained by rational synthetic-integrative activity made it irresistible for subsequent idealists (following Kant himself, in his *Critique of Judgment*) to appeal to and apply *organic* metaphors.

The two-sided notion of conceptual content adverted to in the last two items on the list—what one makes oneself responsible *for* and what one makes oneself responsible *to*, by judging—is also to be explained in terms of the original synthetic activity of integrating one’s commitments according to their rational relations to one another. I have claimed that we can think of this as a *pragmatist* explanatory strategy, in the sense that we find in contemporary philosophers of language who want to understand the *meanings* expressed by various locutions in terms of the *use* of those expressions—that is, in suitably broad senses of the terms, to give explanatory priority to *pragmatics* over *semantics*. But I have so far said nothing about the relations between the two dimensions of conceptual content that show up as the third and fourth items on the list. I have suggested that the target notion of representational purport should itself be understood as a normative (meta)concept: as a matter of taking or treating one’s commitments as subject to a distinctive kind of *authority*, as being *responsible* (for its correctness, in a characteristic sense) *to* things that in that normative sense count as *represented* by those *representing* states, which are what must be integrated into an original synthetic unity. What

remains to be seen is how that rational synthetic integrative activity can be understood as instituting a specifically *representational* normative dimension of authority and responsibility. That is what is required to justify the claim that the original rational synthetic unity of apperception as so far described also deserves to be thought of as a *transcendental* unity of apperception, the subject studied by *transcendental* logic, which goes beyond *general* logic precisely in its concern not with the *form* of judgments, but of their *content*, in particular, their *representational* content.

Intentionality—semantic contentfulness—comes in two flavors: ‘of’-intentionality and ‘that’-intentionality. The first, or *representational* dimension, is semantic directedness at objects: what one is thinking *of* or talking *about*. The second, or *expressive* dimension, concerns the *content* of our thought and talk: *what* one is thinking or saying (*about* what one is thinking or talking *about*). So one can think *of* or *about* foxes, *that* they are nocturnal omnivores. What falls within the scope of the ‘of’ in such a specification is a term, while what follows the ‘that’ in such phrases as “I think (or John thinks) *that* foxes are nocturnal omnivores,” is a declarative sentence. The pre-Kantian early modern philosophical tradition took it for granted that one ought first to offer an independent account of representational, ‘of’-intentionality, of what it is to represent something, and only then, on that basis to explain expressive, ‘that’-intentionality, what it is to judge or claim *that* things are thus-and-so.

That commitment is not strictly entailed by the traditional bottom-up order of logical-semantic explanation that begins with an account of concepts, builds on that an account of judgments, and on that in turn an account of inferences. For one might pursue such a three-stage

account first for what expressions of the various orders of complexity *express*, and only then turn to consideration of what they *represent* (for instance: objects-and-properties, facts, and laws). So Kant's rejection of the traditional logic, in light of the normative-pragmatic priority of judgment (which we have seen, in his hands already has a substantial inferential component)—his treating concepts as “functions of judgment”—is not tantamount to a prioritizing of the expressive over the representational dimensions of semantic content.¹² But in fact, once again, Kant turns the traditional order of explanation on its head. The fact that Kant's approach to judging appeals to integration of judgments by synthesizing them into a whole according to their *rational* relations to one another brings into view in the first instance a notion of the content a declarative sentence expresses, what one has become responsible *for*, that is understood in terms of the broadly inferential relations of *inclusion* and *exclusion* it stands in to other contents (both those included in the current synthetic unity of apperception and candidates not currently endorsed). But for what thereby becomes visible to be intelligible as a notion of conceptual content, it must exhibit also a representational dimension. Thinking *about* something is not a special kind of thinking. It is an aspect of *all* thinking.

So the question is how reference to or representation of objects (representational ‘of’-intentionality) can be made intelligible or shown to be a necessary sub-structure of inferential ‘that’-intentionality, when the latter is understood in terms of the rational synthetic integrative activity that is judging. Here is how I think that story goes (and this is really the punchline of my story in this chapter, the “one far-off, divine event” toward which this whole creation has been

¹² In terms of later developments, we can see it as a question of the relative explanatory priority of the notions of the sense expressed by a sentence and the object represented by a singular term. With the wisdom of hindsight vouchsafed us by Frege's analysis (still opaque to Russell), we can see that the two issues that need to be disentangled are the distinction between the content associated with declarative sentences and that associated with singular terms, and the distinction between sense and reference.

moving): The relations of material incompatibility and inferential consequence among judgeable contents that we have seen are a necessary condition of synthesizing a rational unity of apperception (which is to say judging) already implicitly involve commitments concerning the identity and individuation of *objects* they can accordingly be understood as representing or being *about*. Why? The judgment that *A* is a dog is *not* incompatible with the judgment that *B* is a fox. The judgment that *A* is a dog *is* incompatible with the judgment that *A* is a fox. That means that taking a dog-judgment to be materially incompatible with a fox-judgment *is* taking them to refer to or represent an object: the *same* object. And the same thing holds for relations of material inferential consequence. Taking it that *A* is a dog does *not* entail that *B* is a mammal. But taking it that *A* is a dog *does* entail that *A* is a mammal. So drawing the inference is taking it that the two judgments refer to one and the same object.¹³

¹³ It doesn't matter that these examples appeal only to sentences formed by applying monadic predicates. Inferential and incompatibility relations among sentences formed using relational predicates exhibit corresponding phenomena. For instance, the identities of the terms are essential to the goodness of the inference from "Kant admired Hamann," and "Hamann was a teacher of Herder," to "Kant admired a teacher of Herder." One might also worry about logically compound premises and conclusions (especially in light of the emphasis placed on these in motivating the whole line of thought being considered). I'll say more about those in the next section, in the context of the categories. But once again, the goodness of *material* inferences involving the paradigmatic negative, hypothetical, and disjunctive judgments, for instance, depends on the identity of the objects addressed by the premises and conclusions. "If my dog Coda broke any home furnishings, I will be angry with Coda," entails "If my dog Coda broke my favorite lamp, I will be angry with Coda," but not "If my dog Coda broke my favorite lamp, I will be angry with John," or even "If John broke my favorite lamp, I will be angry with John."

One might think that if I believe that *A* is the mother of *B*, then "*A* is a dog" *is* incompatible with "*B* is a fox." But we should rather say that "*A* is the mother of *B*," "*A* is a dog," and "*B* is a fox," form an incompatible triad. Here there is still triangulation, pointing to *common* objects: "*A* is the mother of *B*," invokes objects common to each of the other two elements.

If there are not "enough" other claims in play, we may not be able to tell whether an incompatible triad has the structure of this example, involving a relational predicate, rather than that exhibited by "*A* is a blackberry," "*A* is red," and "*A* is ripe," which also are irreducibly triadically incompatible. This sort of possible underdetermination would be a problem if the aim were to produce a theory of reference that would say what objects any given claim referred to, given only the rational relations it stands in to other claims. But the aim is only something much weaker: to say what it is to take or treat a claim as so much as purporting to refer to some object or other. For that purpose, it is enough that all the patterns of multiadic incompatibility involve some sort of triangulation-by-coreference.

This *triangulation* by acknowledging material incompatibilities and inferences is, in a nutshell, how the *normative* demand for a *rational* unity of apperception (judgments) makes intelligible *representational* purport: what it is to take or treat judgments as *representing* or being *about objects*. It shows how the *representational* dimension of conceptual content can be understood as already implicit in its articulation by relations of inference and incompatibility, which is how we understood the *expressive* dimension. It provides a sense in which making oneself rationally responsible *for* an inferentially articulated judgeable content, in the sense of being committed to integrating it into a rational unity of apperception, involves taking or treating those judgments as *about* objects, and so as making oneself responsible *to* them. It puts us in a position to understand Kant's otherwise dark claim that "it is the unity of consciousness that alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object, and therefore their objective validity...."¹⁴ Represented objects show up as something like *units of account* for the inferential and incompatibility relations judgeable contents stand in to one another. If two properties are incompatible, then it is impossible for *one and the same* object to exhibit both, but not impossible for *two different* objects to do so. And if possession of one property entails possession of another, then any object that exhibits the first will necessarily exhibit the second. But it is not necessary that some other object do so.

Here, then, is an answer to the question with which we began: what is it for something so much as to *seem* to be a representation (a representing of something represented)? What does one have to *do* to count as taking or treating it *as* a representing *of* something? The answer is that treating it as standing in relations of material incompatibility and inferential consequence to other such things *is* taking or treating it as a representation, as being *about* something. This

¹⁴ B 137.

decidedly non-atomistic way of thinking about representational purport is recognizably a way of picking up Descartes' idea (endorsed and developed by Spinoza and Leibniz) that horizontal relations among representings are what is needed to make intelligible the vertical relations between them and representeds. The account of what one must *do* in order to synthesize a unity of apperception provides the context in which it is possible to understand *both* dimensions of conceptual content: the inferential-expressive and the referential-representational.

V. Categories

9. In order to be able to integrate a judgeable content into a unity of apperception, we have seen, one must be able to distinguish in practice what follows from it and would be evidence for it, and what is incompatible with it.¹⁵ But that means that those abilities can be recruited to introduce a new kind of claim, the conditional *if p then q*, for instance according to the rules:

- One is committed to the conditional *if p then q* if and only if one takes it that the material inference from *p* to *q* is a good one.
- The inference from the conditional *if p then q* and *r* to *q* is good just in case the material inference from *r* to *p* is good.
- The conditional *if p then q* is incompatible with *r* just in case the material inference from *r* to *p* is good, and there is some *s* incompatible with *q* such that the material inference from *r* to *s* is good.

¹⁵ That is, one must make such distinctions. It is not to say that for any judgeable whatsoever one must be disposed to put it into one of these classes. And it is not to say that one must always get it *right*—though if one gets *enough* of it wrong, one will throw into doubt the attribution of commitment to *that* content, in extreme cases, perhaps to *any* content.

(Many different ways of introducing conditionals present themselves at this point. I offer these rules just for definiteness.¹⁶) These amount to rules for forming *conditional* (Kant’s “hypothetical”) judgments. They specify the *conceptual content* of such judgments, for they associate a definite set of material inferential and incompatibility relations with each such judgment. And those relations are what settle what counts as successfully integrating such hypothetical judgments into a synthetic unity of apperception. But that means that anyone who can integrate *any non-hypothetical* judgments into a synthetic unity of apperception already knows how to do everything in principle needed to integrate hypothetical judgments involving those same judgeable contents into such a synthetic unity. In a similar way, it is possible to use the practical mastery of the notion of material incompatibility exhibited by anyone capable of engaging in basic synthetic-integrative activity to introduce explicit notions of negation and necessity—the idea being that one counts as committed to $\Box\sim(p\&q)$ whenever one treats p and q as materially incompatible.¹⁷

Now a concept, on Kant’s usage, is a rule for forming a judgment. In this sense, “forming” a judgment (that is, a judgeable) is settling what counts as successfully integrating it into a synthetic unity of apperception. The concepts according to which hypothetical, modal, and negative judgments are formed, then, are *a priori*, not in the first instance in an *epistemological* sense, but in the *semantic* sense that any subject of apperception, which is to say

¹⁶ Another way to go starts with material incompatibilities. Say that p entails q ($p/=q$) iff everything incompatible with q is incompatible with p . (So Coda’s being a dog entails Coda’s being a mammal, in the sense that everything incompatible with his being a mammal is incompatible with his being a dog.) Then what is incompatible with $p\rightarrow q$ is just whatever is incompatible with q and *not* incompatible with p . Those incompatibilities will in turn settle the entailments of $p\rightarrow q$. The possibility of doing everything with material incompatibilities is significant in understanding the metaphysical and logical primacy Hegel assigns to determinate negation, which is just his version of that concept.

¹⁷ I show in detail how one might do something like this in the Appendices to the fifth of my 2006 John Locke lectures *Between Saying and Doing: Toward an Analytic Pragmatism* [Oxford University Press, 2008].

any subject that can engage in judging (and hence be aware of anything in the sense of sapient or apperceptive awareness), at least implicitly always already possesses (can deploy) those concepts. They are in this sense “pure” concepts: what Kant calls “categories.” And each is associated with a form of judgment. In these cases, they are associated with forms of *compound* judgment: the very kind of judgment consideration of which turned out to require a new theory both of the activity of judging and of the contents judged. In this case of the hypothetical, Kant thinks the category is that of *causation* in the sense of one thing *necessitating* another. Thereon hangs a tale. The only conclusion I want to draw from this line of thought at this point is that here we have an example of at least some of Kant’s central categories that we can understand entirely in terms of the process of synthesizing a rational unity of apperception. And notice that in this way of telling the story, we did *not* have to *presuppose* the possibility of something called “synthetic knowledge *a priori*,” and then search for the conditions of its possibility.

What we *have* had to presuppose, in telling this story about the activity of synthesizing a transcendental unity of apperception, is the availability, as raw materials, of judgeable (or practically endorsable) items possessing *determinate conceptual contents*. That is, it must already be settled, at each stage of the process of rational critical and ampliative integration, what relations of material incompatibility and inferential consequence the conceptual contents that are to be integrated stand in to one another. In order to assess the status of that presupposition concerning conceptual *contents*, we need to look more closely at the kind of normative *force* that is involved in taking responsibility for the *use* of concepts in judgment and intentional action. That is the topic of the next chapter.

VI. Representing Objects

10. I pointed out above that when we understand *represented objects*—what one makes oneself responsible *to* in becoming responsible *for* a judgeable content by judging (integrating it into a synthetic unity of apperception)—in terms of triangulation of the material incompatibility and inferential consequence relations that articulate the contents of those judgeable contents, those objects show up as something like units of account for properties, which stand in those relations of exclusion and inclusion (or consequence) [Hegel’s ‘ausschließen’ and ‘schließen’] to one another. *Representing subjects*, understood as original synthetic unities of apperception, can also be understood as something like units of account, for commitments (judgings, and, in the extended system, also endorsements of practical maxims), which stand in relations of exclusion and consequence to one another. Subjects and objects are alike in “repelling” material incompatibilities, and encompassing material consequences. They are different in that while it is *impossible* for one and the same object at the same time to exhibit two incompatible properties (or stand in incompatible relations) and *necessary* that it have all the properties entailed by any properties it does have, it is merely *inappropriate* for one and the same subject at the same time to undertake incompatible commitments, and *obligatory* that it acknowledge all the commitments entailed by any commitments it does acknowledge. In the case of *objects*, the relations of exclusion and inclusion are *alethic modal* ones: a matter of what is and is not possible and what is and is not necessary. In the case of *subjects*, the relations of exclusion and inclusion are *deontic* or *normative* ones: a matter of what one is and is not entitled and committed to or responsible for, hence of liability to normative assessment and criticism.

Objects play the conceptual functional role of *units of account for alethic modal incompatibilities*. A single object just is what cannot have incompatible properties (at the same time). That is, it is an essential individuating feature of the metaphysical categorical sortal metaconcept object that objects have the metaproperty of *modally* repelling incompatibilities. And in a parallel fashion, subjects too are individuated by the way they normatively ‘repel’ incompatible commitments. It is *not* impermissible for two *different* subjects to have incompatible commitments—say, for me to take the coin to be copper and you to take it be an electrical insulator. What *is* impermissible is for one and the *same* subject to do so. Subjects play the conceptual functional role of *units of account for deontic normative incompatibilities*. That is, it is an essential individuating feature of the metaphysical categorical sortal metaconcept subject that subjects have the metaproperty of *normatively* repelling incompatibilities. A single subject just is what *ought* not to have incompatible commitments (at the same time).¹⁸

When Hegel looks back at Kant’s account of the nature of the subject, construed as an original unity of apperception and marked by the subjective form of all judgments, the “I think,” and of the objects to which subjects make themselves responsible in judging, marked by the objective form of all judgments, the “object=X,” it strikes him that both are to be understood in terms of the synthetic *activity* of integrating judgments with one another, by critical exclusion and ampliative inclusion or extension. That sort of *doing* is what makes the concepts both of subject and of object intelligible: as what is responsible *for* judgments, and what judgments are responsible *to*, respectively. This is one of the core ideas around which Hegel elaborates his

¹⁸ I am suppressing many complications in these formulations. In one sense, it is the whole objective world that “repels” incompatible *facts*, and so is analogous to *each* subject. Thought of this way, it is clusters of intersubstitutable singular terms that are analogous to objects. The general point I am after does not require considering this level of fine structure.

idealism. Consciousness, in the sense of apperception, a relation between subjects and objects, presupposes and is to be explained in terms of the *process* of synthesizing a self—the process that is *self-consciousness*. What now show up as symmetric subjective and objective poles of consciousness (the intentional nexus) are to be understood as corresponding to two aspects of the activity of synthesizing a unity of apperception that can, in the way we have rehearsed, be seen to be necessarily a *transcendental*, that is, object-representing, unity. Alethic and deontic modalities, what is expressed by modal and normative vocabulary, show up as two sides of one coin, intimately bound together by the synthetic-integrative systematizing activity that is the ultimate source of the *senses* of both kinds of locution. I'll have more to say about this idea, and the demarcation of the normative, in Chapter Two: "Autonomy, Community, and Freedom."

VII. A Word on Methodology

11. I have now finished telling the substantive part of the story to which this chapter is dedicated. I want to close by briefly addressing a methodological question that will have occurred to just about everyone who has come this far with me: "What in the world do you think you are doing?" How could I think that I have been talking about anything that *Kant* thought, given all the concepts absolutely central to his project that do *not* appear at all in my tale. Among the topics I did not find it necessary so much as to mention are: intuition, sensibility, receptivity, the fact that concepts without intuitions are empty, space and time, conditions of the possibility of experience, synthetic truths known *a priori*, the distinction between phenomena and noumena, transcendental idealism, the Copernican revolution...and a lot more. One might

well think that these topics are somewhat important to Kant; certainly they loom large in his own telling of his story.

Of course they are important. There is a lot more going on, even just in his theoretical philosophy, than I have adverted to. For instance, Kant is the first philosopher to try to think through the consequences of moving from Aristotelian principles of identity and individuation of empirical objects, in terms of substance and accident, to Newtonian ones, which appeal instead to spatiotemporal location. (This is a naturalist idea, but not one the British empiricists—even the “celebrated Mr. Locke”—had contemplated, never mind endorsed.) He thinks that this metaconceptual transformation has profound consequences for what it is to be semantically in touch with—to be able to represent—objects so conceived. Those considerations are interwoven with a line of thought about sensibility and receptivity and neither are in any obvious way necessarily connected to the story about representational purport that I have told here. That there is nonetheless a deep connection, indeed a necessary harmony, between them is what the transcendental deduction aims to explain.

But the fact that one of Kant’s central preoccupations is synthesizing these two thoughts about content—one, as Kant seems to have thought of it, having to do with the *form* of the metaconcept conceptual content, and the other having to do with its *content*—does not at all mean that it is not possible to dissect from the results of his synthesis one of the constellations of commitments he is concerned to integrate into a larger whole. There is an internal coherence to the line of thought about concepts, judging, hence apperception and understanding that I have been laying out. And we can consider it in abstraction from the other elements with which Kant

combines it. Indeed, we *must* distinguish it if we are to ask the potentially interesting philosophical question of whether you get a better story about intentionality, semantics, and representation with or without the considerations concerning sensibility that he is concerned to integrate with those I have indicated. And I think we must discern the train of thought I have picked out here in order to address the historically interesting question of how to understand the paths that lead from Kant's to Hegel's most interesting ideas.

Of course, there are many such paths. In Chapter Two, I will lay out another one, centering on practical, rather than theoretical philosophy.

Chapter Two

Autonomy, Community, and Freedom

I. Introduction

1. My theme in Chapter One was the innovative *normative* conception of intentionality that lies at the heart of Kant's thought about the mind. He understands judging and willing as taking on distinctive kinds of *responsibility*. And he understands *what* one endorses by doing that—judgeable contents and practical maxims—in terms of what one is thereby committing oneself to *do*, the kind of *task*-responsibility one is taking on. The practical activity one is obliging oneself to engage in by judging and acting is *integrating* those new commitments into a unified whole comprising all the other the commitments one acknowledges. What makes it a *unified* whole is the *rational* relations among its parts. One is obliged to resolve material incompatibilities one finds among one's commitments, by rejecting or modifying some of the offending elements. This is one's *critical* obligation. And one is obliged to acknowledge commitment to the material inferential consequences of one's commitments. This is one's *ampliative* obligation.

Engaging in those integrative activities is synthesizing a *self* or *subject*, which shows up as what is responsible *for* the component commitments into which it is articulated. Kant's core *pragmatist* commitment consists in his methodological strategy of understanding *what* one is in this sense responsible for or committed to, the *contents* of one's judgments and willings, in terms

of the role they play in what acts with those contents make one responsible for *doing*: criticizing and amplifying the commitments one thereby undertakes. Such a strategy accordingly demands that those contents determine the relations of material incompatibility and inferential consequence in which they stand to each other (since that is what is needed to make possible resolution of conflicts and extraction of consequences). The rules that settle those rational relations are the *concepts* one counts as applying in judging or willing, which activities then become visible as endorsements of specifically *discursive* (that is, *conceptual*) contents.

We saw that in taking two commitments to be materially incompatible, or to stand in material inferential-consequential relations, one is in effect taking them to *refer to* or *represent* a single *object*: to attribute to that object properties that exclude or include one another, that is, that are themselves incompatible or stand in a consequential relation. As a result, the synthetic-integrative process, with its aspects of critical and ampliative activity (what Hegel with characteristic imagery talks about as the “exhaling and inhaling” that maintain the rational organic integrity of the discursive subject), provides the basis for understanding both the subjective and the objective poles of the intentional nexus. Subjects are what repel incompatible commitments in that they *ought* not endorse them, and objects are what repel incompatible properties in that they *cannot* exhibit them. (Subjects are *obliged* to endorse the consequences of their commitments, and objects *necessarily* exhibit the properties that are consequences of their properties.)

On this account, there is an intimate connection—grounded in the fundamental process or activity of rational synthesis or integration—between the (vertical) *semantic-intentional* relations

between representing subjects and represented objects, on the one hand, and the (horizontal) *deontic normative* relations among subjective commitments and *alethic modal* relations among objective properties, on the other. The way I have told this bit of the story perhaps owes more to what Hegel makes of Kant's thought than to Kant's own understanding of it. But Kant himself did, as no-one had done before, connect deontic and alethic modalities as pure concepts expressing related species of *necessity*: practical and natural necessity, respectively.

II. Categorical Concepts

2. For Kant read Hume's practical and theoretical philosophies as raising variants of a single question. On the side of *practical* reasoning, Hume asks what our warrant is for moving from descriptions of how things *are* to prescriptions of how they *ought* to be. How can we rationally justify the move from 'is' to 'ought'? On the side of *theoretical* reasoning, Hume asks what our warrant is for moving from descriptions of what *in fact* happens to characterizations of what *must* happen, and what *could not* happen. How can we rationally justify the move from descriptions of matter-of-factual regularities to formulations of necessary laws? In Kant's terminology, these are both kinds of 'necessity,' practical and natural necessity, because for him, 'necessary' (notwendig) just means "according to a *rule*". Hume's predicament is that he finds that even his best understanding of *facts* doesn't yield an understanding of either of the two sorts of *rules* governing and relating those facts, underwriting assessments of which of the things that actually happen (all he thought we can directly experience) *ought* to happen (are *normatively* necessary), or *must* happen (are *naturally* necessary). (I have been expounding the fundamental *idealist* idea that to understand, in terms of our normative, rational, synthetic activity, why there

must be these two flavors of rules, deontic and alethic, and how they are related to one another as they are, is to understand the basic nature and structure of *intentionality*, in the sense of the expressive and representational relations between subjects and objects.)

Kant's response to the proposed predicament is that we cannot be in the position Hume envisages: understanding matter-of-factual empirical claims and judgments perfectly well, but having no idea what is meant by modal or normative ones. To judge, claim, or believe that the cat is on the mat one must have at least a minimal practical ability to sort material inferences in which that content is involved (as premise or conclusion) into good ones and bad ones, and to discriminate what is from what is not materially incompatible with it. Part of doing that is associating with those inferences ranges of counterfactual robustness: distinguishing collateral beliefs functioning as auxiliary hypotheses that would, from those that would not, infringe the inference. So, for example, one must have such dispositions as to treat the cat's being on the mat as compatible with a nearby tree being somewhat nearer, or the temperature a few degrees higher, but not with the sun being as close as the tree or the temperature being thousands of degrees higher. One must know such things as that the cat might chase a mouse or flee from a dog, but that the mat can do neither, and that the mat would remain essentially as it is if one jumped up and down on it or beat it with a stick, while the cat would not. It is not that there is any one of the counterfactual inferences I have mentioned that is necessary for understanding what it is for the cat to be on the mat. But if one makes *no* distinctions of this sort—treats the possibility of the cat's jumping off the mat or yawning as on a par with its sprouting wings and starting to fly, or suddenly becoming microscopically small, does not at all distinguish between what can and cannot happen to the cat and what can and cannot happen to the mat—then one

does not count as understanding the claim well enough to endorse it, in any sense save the derivative, parasitic one in which one can believe of a sentence in Turkish, which one does not at all understand, that it is true. Sellars puts this Kantian point well in the title of one of his essays: “Concepts as Involving Laws, and Inconceivable without Them.”

If that is right, then in being able to employ concepts such as cat and mat in ordinary empirical descriptive claims one already knows how to do everything one needs to know how to do in order to deploy concepts such as possible and necessary—albeit fallibly and imperfectly. Grasp of what is made explicit by judgments formed using those alethic modal concepts is *implicit* in and presupposed by grasp of *any* empirical descriptive concepts. This is part of what Kant means by calling them “pure” concepts, that is “categories,” and saying that our access to them is “*a priori*”—in the sense that the ability to deploy them is presupposed by the ability to deploy *any* concepts, including especially ordinary empirical descriptive concepts. This latter claim is not at base *epistemological*, but *semantic*.

What about the concern, on the side of practical philosophy, with the question of how grasp of *normative* vocabulary is related to grasp of empirical descriptive vocabulary? A closely analogous argument applies. Any rational agent, anyone who can act intentionally, must practically understand the possibility of acting for *reasons*. That means making some distinction in practice between sample bits of practical reasoning that do, and those that do not, entitle or commit those who endorse their premises to their conclusions. For being an intentional agent means being intelligible as responding differentially to the goodness of practical reasons for action provided by one’s discursive attitudes. The sort of force such reasoning gives to its

conclusion is *normative* force. Good bits of practical reasoning give the agent *reason* to act in one way rather than another, in the sense of showing that it is rationally *permissible* or *obligatory* to do so. If that is right, then being able to engage in practical reasoning at all, being able to act for practical reasons, which is to say to be an intentional agent, already involves exercising all of the abilities needed to deploy normative concepts. For concepts such as commitment or obligation, entitlement or permission, expressing various kinds of oughts, just make it possible to express *explicitly* (which is to say, in judgeable form), distinctions and attitudes that one *implicitly* acknowledges and adopts already in sorting practical inferences into materially good and bad ones (however fallibly).

In fact (though this is a fact Hegel makes more of than Kant does), Kant's normative account of theoretical judgments means that we do not even have to look to the practical sphere to mount an argument along these lines. Taking responsibility for or committing oneself to any judgeable content is integrating it into a synthetic unity of apperception. Doing that is practically acknowledging both critical and ampliative *obligations*, treating the embrace of incompatible contents and the failure to acknowledge consequential ones as not *permissible*. So in being apperceptively aware of anything at all one is already exercising all the abilities needed to master the use of at least some basic normative concepts. These, too, are "pure" concepts, which make explicit something implicit in the use of *any* concepts. Indeed, we saw last time that in Kant's picture, alethic modal and deontic normative concepts show up as intimately related. For they make explicit different, but complementary aspects of the process of apperceptive synthesis, corresponding respectively to the subjective form of judgment, which gives us our grip on the

concept of representing subjects, and the objective form of judgment, which gives us our grip on the concept of represented objects.

A central observation of Kant's is that what we might call the framework of empirical description—the commitments, practices, abilities, and procedures that form the necessary practical background within the horizon of which alone it is possible to engage in the cognitive theoretical activity of describing how things empirically are—essentially involves elements expressible in words that are *not* descriptions, that do *not* perform the function of describing (in the *narrow* sense) how things are. These include, on the objective side, what is made explicit as statements of *laws*, using alethic modal concepts to relate the concepts applied in descriptions. Kant addresses the question of how we should understand the semantic and cognitive status of those framework commitments: are they the sort of thing that can be assessed as *true* or *false*? If true, do they express *knowledge*? If they are knowledge, how do we come to know and justify the claims expressing these commitments? Are they a kind of *empirical* knowledge? I think that the task of crafting a satisfactory idiom for discussing these issues and addressing these questions is still largely with us, well into the third century after Kant first posed them.

Now Kant already realized that the situation is much more complicated and difficult than is suggested by this way of putting the issue: as though all that were needed were to distinguish framework-constitutive commitments from commitments that become possible only within the framework (what becomes the dichotomy between language and theory, meaning and belief, that Carnap endorses and Quine rejects). For it is one thing to acknowledge that the existence of “lawlike” relations among concepts or properties (that is, ones that support counterfactually

robust inference) that are expressed explicitly by the use of alethic modal vocabulary is a necessary part of the framework of empirical description, that (as Sellars puts the point) no *description* is possible except in a context in which *explanation* is also possible, and that the function of the modal vocabulary that expresses those explanatory relations is not descriptive in the narrow sense whose paradigm is the statement of particular empirical facts. That is granting the claim *that* there must be laws (reflected in rules of inference) governing the properties (reflected in concepts) used in empirical descriptions is part of the framework of description(-and-explanation). *That* claim will not itself be an *empirical* claim, in the sense of one that can only be established by investigating what descriptions actually apply to things. If it is true and knowable, it is so, we could say, *a priori*. It is, we would be tempted to say in Kant's hylomorphic terms, a matter of the *form*, rather than the *content* of empirical knowledge. But the further point must then be granted that *which* lawlike statements express *genuine* laws (are "objectively valid") and which do not *is* an *empirical* question. So we need a way of talking about broadly *empirical* claims that are not in the narrow sense *descriptive* ones, codifying as they do *explanatory* relations among ground-level particular descriptive applications of determinate empirical concepts. Responding to this challenge (and to its analog on the side of practical activity) is one of the central animating and orienting themes of Kant's and Hegel's work (as it would be later for Peirce's and Sellars's).

III. Freedom and Autonomy

3. Upstream from all these considerations, in the order of explanation I am pursuing, is Kant's *normative* understanding of mental activity, on both the theoretical and the practical side:

his taking judging and endorsing practical maxims both to consist in *committing* oneself, taking on distinctively discursive sorts of *responsibility*. This is what corresponds on the subjective side to the framework elements made explicit on the objective side in terms of alethic modal vocabulary. In Chapter One, I suggested that this idea about the centrality of normativity is the axis around which all of his thought should be understood to turn, and that in light of that, understanding the nature of the *bindingness* of conceptual norms becomes a central philosophical task. That is the topic of this chapter.

An integral element of Kant's normative turn is his radically original conception of *freedom*. His theory is unusual (though not wholly without precedent) in putting forward a conception of *positive* rather than negative freedom. That is, it is a conception of freedom *to* do something, rather than freedom *from* some sort of constraint. Freedom for Kant is a distinctive kind of practical ability. What *is* unprecedented, I think, is the way he thinks about that ability. The philosophical tradition, especially its empiricist limb, had understood the issues clustering around the notion of human freedom in alethic modal terms. Determinism asserted the *necessity* of intentional performances, given non-intentionally specified antecedent conditions. The freedom of an intentional action was thought of in terms of the *possibility* of the agent's having done otherwise. The question was how to construe the subjection of human conduct to *laws* of the sort that govern the natural world. For Kant, though, these categories apply to the *objective* side of the intentional nexus: the domain of represented objects. Practical freedom is an aspect of the spontaneity of discursive activity on the *subjective* side: the domain of representing subjects. The modality that characterizes and articulates this dimension is not alethic but

deontic. What is distinctive of it is not being governed by laws, but by *conceptions* of laws, that is, normative attitudes. Kant's conception of freedom, too, is a *normative* one.

Spontaneity, in Kant's usage, is the capacity to deploy concepts. Deploying concepts is making judgments and endorsing practical maxims. Doing that, we have seen, is *committing* oneself, undertaking a distinctive sort of discursive *responsibility*. The positive freedom exhibited by exercises of our spontaneity is just this normative ability: the ability to commit ourselves, to become responsible. It can be thought of as a kind of *authority*: the authority to bind oneself by conceptual norms. That it is the authority to *bind* oneself means that it involves a correlative kind of *responsibility*. That the norms in question are *conceptual* norms means that the responsibility involved in exercising that sort of authority is a *rational* responsibility. We have seen that it is a kind of *practical* responsibility, the responsibility to *do* something. It is the responsibility to integrate the commitment one has undertaken with others that serve as *reasons* for or against it. Kantian positive freedom is the *rational* capacity to adopt *normative statuses*: the ability to *commit* oneself, the *authority* to make oneself *responsible*.

To get an intuitive sense of how such a capacity can sensibly be thought of as a kind of positive *freedom*, it is helpful to think of an example suggested by the guiding metaphor of Kant's popular essay "Was ist Aufklärung?" Consider what happens when a young person achieves her legal majority. Suddenly she has the authority to bind herself legally, for instance by entering into contracts. That gives her a host of new abilities: to borrow money, take out a mortgage, start a business. The new authority to bind oneself normatively, to take on these new normative statuses, involves a huge increase in positive freedom. The difference between

discursive creatures and non-discursive ones is likewise to be understood in terms of the sort of *normative positive freedom* exhibited by the concept-users.

Further, for Kant this sort of normative positive freedom is a kind of *rational* freedom. For the exercise of that spontaneity is *rational* activity. Rationality in this sense does not consist in knowers and agents generally, or even often, having good reasons for what they believe and do. It consists rather just in being in the space of reasons, in the sense that knowers and agents count as such insofar as they exercise their normative authority to bind themselves by conceptual norms, undertake discursive commitments and responsibilities, and so make themselves liable to distinctive kinds of normative *assessment*. For they are liable to assessment as to the goodness of their *reasons* for exercising their authority as they do, for taking on *those* specific commitments and responsibilities. Assessment of those reasons is assessment of their success at integrating the new commitments with others they have similarly adopted and acknowledged. Whatever the actual causal antecedents of their judgments and intentional doings, Kantian knowers and agents are *obliged* (committed) to have *reasons* for their judgments and actions. (This rational justificatory obligation is a kind of resultant of the critical and ampliative obligations we have already registered.)

On this account, far from being incompatible with constraint, freedom *consists* in a distinctive kind of constraint: constraint by norms. This sounds paradoxical, but it is not. The positive freedom Kant is describing is the practical capacity to be bound by discursive norms. This is a capacity that is compatible with, but extends beyond being bound by the laws that govern natural beings. It is by exercising this capacity that we raise ourselves above the merely

natural, and become beings who live, and move, and have our being in the normative space of commitments and responsibilities, and so (because it is the rational relations they stand in that articulate the contents of those normative statuses) *reasons*.

4. The aspiration to be entitled to a conception of normative positive freedom along these lines makes all the more urgent the philosophical project of understanding normative statuses such as commitment, responsibility, and authority. One of the permanent intellectual achievements, and great philosophical legacies of the Enlightenment—and perhaps the greatest contribution modern philosophers have ever made to the wider culture—is the development of secular conceptions of legal, political, and moral normativity. In the place of traditional appeals to authority derived ultimately from divine commands (thought of as ontologically based upon the status of the heavenly lord as creator of those he commands), Enlightenment philosophers conceived of kinds of responsibility and authority (commitment and entitlement) that derive from the practical attitudes of human beings. So for instance in social contract theories of political obligation, normative statuses are thought of as instituted by the intent of individuals to bind themselves, on the model of promising or entering into a contract. Political authority is understood as ultimately derived from its (perhaps only implicit) *acknowledgment* by those over whom it is exercised.

This movement of thought is animated by a revolutionary new conception of the relations between normative *statuses* and the *attitudes* of the human beings who are the subjects of such statuses, the ones who commit themselves, undertake responsibilities, and exercise authority, and who acknowledge and attribute (practically take themselves and others to exhibit) those statuses.

This is the idea that normative statuses are *attitude-dependent*. It is the idea that authority, responsibility, and commitment were not features of the non- or pre-human world. They did not exist until human beings started taking or treating each other *as* authoritative, responsible, committed, and so on—that is, until they started adopting normative *attitudes* towards one another. Those attitudes, and the social practices that make adopting them possible, *institute* the normative statuses—in a distinctive sense that it is a principal task of philosophy to investigate and elucidate. This view of the global attitude-dependence of norms contrasts with the traditional objectivist one, according to which the norms that determine what is “fitting” in the way of human conduct are to be read off of features of the non-human world that are independent of the attitudes of those subject to the norms. The job of human normative subjects on this traditional picture is to conform their attitudes (what they *take* to be correct or appropriate conduct) to those attitude-independent norms—to discover and acknowledge the objective normative facts, on the practical side, just as they are obliged to discover and acknowledge objective non-normative facts on the theoretical side.

Kant identifies himself with this modern tradition in that he embraces the Enlightenment commitment to the attitude-dependence of basic normative statuses (a commitment that, in the context of a normative approach to cognitive-practical activity, and a pragmatist approach to understanding conceptual contents in terms of what one is *doing* in endorsing them, has considerable significance for subsequent idealism). This is a thought that can be developed in a number of ways. (Further along, I’ll consider some paths opened up by beginning to disambiguate it along two crucial dimensions.) One of Kant’s big ideas is that it can be exploited to provide a criterion of demarcation for the normative. To be entitled to a normative

conception of positive human freedom as discursive spontaneity, Kant must be able to distinguish the *normative* constraint characteristic of knowing and acting *subjects* from the necessitating *causal* constraint characteristic of the *objects* they know about and act on. In his terms, he must be able to distinguish constraint by *conceptions*¹⁹ of laws from constraint by laws. What is the difference between adopting a *normative status* and coming to be in a *natural state*? What is the difference between how norms and causes “bind” those subject to them?

Following his hero Rousseau, Kant radicalizes (what he and his followers thought of as) the Enlightenment discovery of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses into an account of what is distinctive of normative bindingness, according to a model of *autonomy*. This model, and the criterion for demarcating normative statuses from natural properties that it embodies, is intended as a successor-conception to the traditional model of *obedience* of a subordinate to the commands of a superior. On that traditional conception, one’s normative statuses are determined by one’s place in the great feudal chain of normative subordination—which may itself be thought of either as an objective feature of the natural (and supernatural) world, or as itself determined normatively by some notion of the deserts of those ranked according to their asymmetric authority over and responsibility to one another. The contrasting autonomy idea is that we, as subjects, are genuinely *normatively* constrained only by rules we constrain *ourselves* by, those that we adopt and acknowledge *as* binding on us. Merely natural creatures, as objects, are bound only by rules in the form of laws whose bindingness is not at all conditioned by their attitudes of acknowledging those rules *as* binding on them. The difference between non-normative *compulsion* and normative *authority* is that we are genuinely *normatively* responsible only to what we *acknowledge as* authoritative. In this sense, only we can bind ourselves, in the sense

¹⁹ Or representations: “Vorstellungen.”

that we are only *normatively* bound by the results of exercises of our freedom: (self-constitutive) *self*-bindings, commitments we have undertaken by acknowledging them.²⁰ This is to say that the positive freedom to adopt normative statuses, to *be* responsible or committed, is the same as the positive freedom to *make* ourselves responsible, by our attitudes. So Kant's normative conception of positive freedom is of *freedom* as a kind of *authority*. Specifically, it consists in our *authority* to *make* ourselves *rationally responsible* by *taking* ourselves to be responsible. The capacity to *be* bound by norms and the capacity to *bind ourselves* by norms are one and the same. That they are one and the same is what it is for it to be *norms* that we are bound by—in virtue of binding ourselves by them. Here authority and responsibility are symmetric and reciprocal, constitutive features of the normative subject who is at once authoritative and responsible.

This whole constellation of ideas about normativity, reason, and freedom, initiated by Kant, and developed by his successors, is, I think, what Heidegger means when he talks about “the dignity and spiritual greatness of German Idealism.”

IV. From Autonomy to Reciprocal Recognition

5. In Chapter One, I claimed that Kant's rejection of the traditional classificatory theory of consciousness and the need for a new theory both of judging and of what is judged results from considering the distinction between pragmatic force and semantic content, the act of judging and

²⁰ The acknowledgement of authority may be merely implicit, as when Kant argues that in acknowledging others as concept users we are implicitly also acknowledging a commitment not to treat their concept-using activities as mere means to our own ends. That is, there can be background commitments that are part of the implicit structure of rationality and normativity as such. But even in these cases, the source of our normative *statuses* is understood to lie in our normative *attitudes*.

judgeable content, as it shows up in the context of *compound* forms of judgment. That same distinction now combines with the autonomy thesis (which is a thesis about pragmatic *force*, or what one is *doing* in judging) to yield a demand for the relative *independence* of force and content: attitude-*dependence* of normative force turns out to require attitude-*independence* of content. The Kant-Rousseau autonomy criterion of demarcation of the normative tells us something about normative *force*—about the nature of the bindingness or validity of the discursive commitments undertaken in judging or acting intentionally. That force, it tells us, is *attitude-dependent*. It is important to realize that such an approach can only work if it is paired with an account of the *contents* that normative force is invested in that construes those contents (and in that regard, the normative statuses whose contents they are) as attitude-*independent*.

The autonomy criterion says that it is in a certain sense up to us (it depends on our activities and attitudes) *whether* we are bound by (responsible to) a particular conceptual norm (though acknowledging *any* conceptual commitments may involve further implicit rationality- and intentionality-structural commitments). However, if not only the normative *force*, but also the *contents* of those commitments—*what* we are responsible for—were *also* up to us, then, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, “whatever seems right to us would be right.” In that case, talk of what is right or wrong could get no intelligible grip: no norm would have been brought to bear, no genuine commitment undertaken, no normative status instituted. Put another way, autonomy, binding oneself by a norm, rule, or law, has two components, corresponding to ‘autos’ and ‘nomos’. One must bind *oneself*, but one must also *bind* oneself. If not only *that* one is bound by a certain norm, but also *what* that norm involves—what is correct or incorrect according to it—is up to the one endorsing it, the notion that one is *bound*, that a distinction has been put in

place between what is correct and incorrect according to that norm goes missing. The attitude-dependence of normative *force*, which is what the autonomy thesis asserts, is intelligible in principle *only* in a context in which the boundaries of the *content*—what I acknowledge as constraining me and by that acknowledgment *make* into a normative *constraint* on me in the sense of opening myself up to normative *assessments* according to it—are *not* in the same way attitude-dependent. That is a condition of making the notion of normative constraint intelligible. We may call it the requirement of the relative *independence* of normative *force* and *content*.

Kant secures this necessary division of labor by appeal to *concepts*, as rules that determine what is a reason for what, and *so* what falls under the concepts so articulated. (If being malleable is a conclusive consequence of being gold, then only malleable particulars can fall under the concept gold.) His picture of empirical activity as consisting in the application of concepts—of judging and acting as consisting in the endorsement of propositions and maxims—strictly separates the *contents* endorsed from the *acts* of endorsing them. The latter is our responsibility, the former is not.²¹ In Kant’s picture, the judging or acting empirical consciousness always already has available a stable of completely determinate concepts. Its function is to choose among them, picking which ones to invest its authority in by applying to objects, hence which conceptually articulated responsibility to assume, which discursive commitments to undertake. Judging that what I see ahead is a *dog*—applying that concept in perceptual judgment—may initially be successfully integratable into my transcendental unity of apperception, in that it is not incompatible with any of my other commitments. Subsequent

²¹ This does not require that the constitution of conceptual contents be wholly independent of our activity. Kant in fact sees “judgments of reflection” as playing a crucial role in it. It requires only that each empirical (“determinate”) judgment be made in a context in which already determinately contentful concepts are available as candidates for application.

empirical experience may normatively require me to withdraw that characterization, and lead me to apply instead, say, the concept *fox*. That is my activity and my responsibility. But what other judgments are compatible with something being a dog or a fox (so what would oblige me to withdraw the application of those concepts) is *not* at that point up to me. It is settled by the contents of those concepts, by the particular rules I can choose to apply and so to bind myself by.

In taking this line, Kant is adopting a characteristic rationalist order of explanation. It starts with the idea that empirical experience presupposes the availability of determinate concepts. For apperception—awareness in the sense required for sapience, awareness that can have *cognitive* significance—is judgment: the application of concepts. Even classification of something particular as of some general kind counts as *awareness* only if the general kind one applies is a *concept*: something whose application can both serve as and stand in need of *reasons* constituted by the application of *other* concepts. When an iron pipe rusts in the rain, it is in some sense classifying its environment as being of a certain general kind, but is in no interesting sense *aware* of it. So one must already have concepts in order to be aware of anything at all.

Of course, this is just the point at which the pre-Kantian rationalists notoriously faced the problem of where determinate concepts come from. If they are presupposed by experiential awareness, then it seems that they cannot be thought of as derived from it, for instance by abstraction. Once the normative apperceptive enterprise is up-and-running, further concepts may be produced or refined by various kinds of judgments (for instance, reflective ones), but concepts must always already be available for judgment, and hence apperception, to take place at all. Empirical activity, paradigmatically apperception in the form of judgment, presupposes

transcendental activity, which is the rational criticism and rectification of ones commitments, making them into a normatively coherent, unified system. Defining that normative unity requires the availability of concepts with already determinate contents (roles in reasoning). Leibniz's appeal to innateness is not an attractive response to the resulting explanatory demand. And it would not be much improvement to punt the central issue of the institution of conceptual norms from the realm of empirical into the realm of noumenal activity. I think it is a nice question just how Kant's account deals with this issue.

6. As I read him, Hegel criticizes Kant on just this point. He sees Kant as having been uncharacteristically and culpably uncritical about the origin and nature of the *determinateness* of the contents of empirical concepts. Hegel's principal innovation is his idea that in order to follow through on Kant's fundamental insight into the essentially *normative* character of mind, meaning, and rationality, we need to recognize that normative statuses such as authority and responsibility are at base *social* statuses. He broadens Kant's account of synthesizing normative individual selves or subjects (unities of apperception) by the activity of *rational integration*, into an account of the simultaneous synthesizing of apperceiving individual selves (subjects of normative statuses) and their communities, by practices of *reciprocal recognition*. How does this response fit into the space of possibilities defined by the considerations I have been putting forward as motivating Kant?

The problem is set by a tension between the autonomy model of normative bindingness, which is a way of working out and filling in the Enlightenment commitment to the attitude-dependence of normative statuses, on the one hand, and the requirement that the contents by

which autonomous subjects bind themselves be at least relatively attitude-*independent*, in the sense that while according to the autonomy thesis the subject has the authority over the *judging*, in the sense of *which* concepts are applied, which judgeable content is endorsed (responsibility is taken for), *what* one then becomes responsible for must be independent of one's taking responsibility for it, on the other. This is to say that the content itself must have an *authority* that is independent of the *responsibility* that the judger takes for it. And the problem is to reconcile that requirement with the autonomy model of the bindingness of normative statuses such as authority. Whose attitudes is the authority of conceptual contents dependent on? The autonomy model says it must be dependent on the attitudes of those responsible to that authority, namely the subjects who are judging and acting, so undertaking commitments with those contents and thereby subjecting themselves to that authority. But the requirement of relative independence of normative force and content forbids exactly that sort of attitude-dependence.

To resolve this tension, we must disambiguate the basic idea of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses along two axes. First, we can ask: *whose* attitudes? The autonomy model takes a clear stand here: it is the attitudes of those who are responsible, that is, those over whom authority is exercised. This is not the only possible answer. For instance, the traditional subordination model of normative bindingness as *obedience*, by contrast to which the autonomy view defines itself, can be understood not only in objectivist terms, as rejecting the attitude-dependence of normative statuses, but also in terms compatible with that insight. So understood it acknowledges the attitude-dependence of normative statuses, but insists that it is the attitudes of those *exercising* authority, the superiors, rather than the attitudes of those *over whom* it is exercised, the subordinates, that are the source of its bindingness. (It is in this form that

Enlightenment thinkers fully committed to attitude-dependence, such as Pufendorf, could continue to subscribe to the obedience model.)

Hegel wants to respect both these thoughts. The trouble with them, he thinks, is that each of them construes the reciprocal notions of authority and responsibility in a one-sided [einseitig] way: as having an *asymmetric* structure that is unmotivated and ultimately unsustainable. If X has authority over Y, then Y is responsible to X. The obedience view sees only the attitudes of X as relevant to the bindingness of the normative relation between them, while the autonomy view sees only the attitudes of Y as mattering. Hegel's claim is that they *both* do. The problem is to understand how the *authority* to undertake a determinate responsibility that for Kant is required for an exercise of freedom is actually supplied with a correlative determinate *responsibility*, so that one is intelligible as genuinely *committing* oneself to something, constraining oneself. This co-ordinate structure of authority and responsibility ('independence' and 'dependence' in the normative sense Hegel gives to these terms) is what Hegel's *social* model of *reciprocal recognition* is supposed to make sense of. He thinks (and this is an Enlightenment thought, of a piece with that which motivates the autonomy criterion of demarcation of the normative) that all authority and responsibility are ultimately *social* phenomena. They are the products of the *attitudes* of those who, on the one hand, *undertake* responsibility and *exercise* authority, and on the other, of those who *hold* others responsible, and *acknowledge* their authority. In spite of the formal parity of both models as asymmetric, the modern autonomy model represents for Hegel a clear advance on the traditional obedience model in that it *does* aspire to endorse symmetry of authority and responsibility. But it does so by insisting that these relations of authority and responsibility obtain only when X and Y are

identical: when the authoritative one and the responsible one coincide. That immediate collapse of roles achieves symmetry, but only at the cost of making it impossible to satisfy the demand of relative independence of normative force and content.²²

The next clarificatory question that must be asked about the basic idea of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses is: what *sort* of dependence? In particular, are the attitudes in question *sufficient* to institute the normative statuses? Or are they merely *necessary*? The stronger, sufficiency, claim seems to be required to sustain the tension between the autonomy model and the requirement of relative independence of force from content. When I introduced the attitude-dependence idea, I characterized it in two different ways. On the one hand, I said it was the idea that

Authority, responsibility, and commitment were not features of the non- or pre-human world. They did not exist until human beings started taking or treating each other *as* authoritative, responsible, committed, and so on—that is, until they started adopting normative *attitudes* towards one another.

²² I think that the reason why the structural deficiency in the Kantian notion of autonomy that I take Hegel to be responding to has not been much discussed in contemporary treatments of that concept (which are extensive and sophisticated) is that those discussions typically take place within a substantially more limited horizon of concerns than that in which the issue is being situated here. If one thinks of autonomy exclusively as a principle in *practical* philosophy, one will be liable, and may be entitled, to take for granted the conceptual contents deployed in autonomously endorsed reasons for action (as opposed to heteronomous inclinations to act). If instead one sees it playing the pivotal role of providing a criterion of demarcation for normativity in the context of Kant's normative conception of apperception, subjectivity, and intentionality in *both* the theoretical and practical spheres and of the pragmatist order of semantic explanation that seeks to understand conceptual *content* in terms of normative *force* (in terms of what one is *doing*, the responsibilities one is undertaking, the authority one is exercising, in judging or endorsing a practical maxim), one does not have that luxury. For it is in that wider context that the requirement of relative independence of force and content arises, and needs to be reconciled (rationally integrated) with both the attitude-dependence of normative statuses at the core of autonomy and the pragmatist commitment to understanding content in terms of force. Cf. Kant's remark:

In respect of the faculties of the soul generally, regarded as higher faculties, i.e., as faculties containing an autonomy, understanding is the one that contains the constitutive *a priori* principles for the faculty of cognition (the theoretical knowledge of nature). [*Critique of Judgment* Introduction, Section IX.]

This asserts only the *necessity* of normative attitudes for normative statuses. But I also put it as the idea that

Those attitudes, and the social practices that made adopting them possible,
institute the normative statuses.

Here the suggestion is of the *sufficiency* of attitudes to bring normative statuses—genuine obligations and rights—into existence. A moderate version of the normative attitude-dependence thesis rejects objectivism by insisting that the notions of responsibility and authority essentially involve (in the sense of being unintelligible apart from) the notion of *acknowledging* responsibility and authority. One can say that political legitimacy is not possible without the consent of the governed without thereby being committed to the possibility of reducing legitimacy without remainder to such consent. And a moderate autonomy thesis might treat subjects as responsible only to what they acknowledge as authoritative without dissolving the authority wholly into that acknowledgement. The one-sided obedience view took the attitudes of the superior to be sufficient all by themselves to institute a normative status of authority and corresponding responsibility on the part of the subordinate. And the one-sided autonomy view took the acknowledgement of responsibility by the one bound to be sufficient all by itself to institute the authority by which he is bound. What Hegel sees as wrong about the obedience view is accordingly not that it makes each subject's normative statuses dependent on the attitudes of others, but its asymmetric treatment of those attitudes as sufficient to institute those statuses all by themselves, independently of the attitudes of the one whose statuses they are.

Taking someone to be responsible or authoritative, attributing a normative deontic status to someone, is the attitude-kind that Hegel (picking up a term of Fichte's) calls 'recognition'

[Anerkennung]. Hegel's view is what you get if you take the attitudes of *both* recognizer and recognized, both those who are authoritative and those who are responsible, to be essential *necessary* conditions of the institution of genuine normative statuses, and require in addition that those attitudes be symmetric or reciprocal [gegenseitig]. In a certain sense (which it will be our business to investigate more closely in the next chapter), Hegel also takes it that those *individually necessary* normative attitudes are *jointly sufficient* to institute normative statuses. What institutes normative statuses is *reciprocal* recognition. Someone becomes responsible only when others *hold* him responsible, and exercises authority only when others *acknowledge* that authority. One has the authority to *petition* others for recognition, in an attempt to become responsible or authoritative. To do that, one must recognize others as able to *hold* one responsible or *acknowledge* one's authority. This is according those others a certain kind of authority. To achieve such statuses, one must be recognized by them in turn. That is to make oneself in a certain sense responsible to them. But they have that authority only insofar as one grants it to them by recognizing them as authoritative. So the process that synthesizes an apperceiving normative subject, one who can *commit* himself in judgment and action, become responsible cognitively and practically, is a *social* process of reciprocal recognition that at the same time synthesizes a normative cognitive community of those recognized by and who recognize that normative subject: a community bound together by reciprocal relations of authority over and responsibility to each other.

Here is a mundane example. Achieving the status of being a good chess-player is not something I can do simply by coming subjectively to adopt a certain attitude toward myself. It is, in a certain sense, up to me whom I regard as good chess-players: whether I count any

woodpusher who can play a legal game, only formidable club players, Masters, or Grand Masters. That is, it is up to me whom I recognize as good chess-players, in the sense in which I aspire to be one. But it is not then in the same sense up to me whether I qualify as one of them. To earn their recognition in turn, I must be able to play up to their standards. To *be*, say, a formidable club player, I must be recognized as such by those I recognize as such. (The same is true of being a good philosopher.) My recognitive attitudes can define a virtual community, but only the reciprocal recognition by those I recognize can make me actually a member of it, accord me the status for which I have implicitly petitioned by recognizing them. My attitudes exercise recognitive authority in determining whose recognitive attitudes I am responsible to for my actual normative status.

As in the Kantian autonomy model of normative bindingness, according to the recognitive model we bind ourselves, collectively, and individually. No-one has authority over me except that which I grant by my recognitive attitudes. Those attitudes of mine are accordingly a necessary condition of my having the status I do. But as on the traditional obedience model, others do exercise genuine authority over my normative statuses: what I am committed to, responsible for, and authoritative about. Their attitudes are also a necessary condition of my actually having the status I do. The two aspects of normative dependence, authority and responsibility, are entirely mutual, reciprocal, and symmetrical. And together, the attitudes of myself and my fellows in the recognitive community, of those I recognize and who recognize me, are sufficient to institute normative statuses that are *not* subjective in the same way in which the normative attitudes that institute them are.

Hegel diagnoses the incompatibility of commitment to the attitude-dependence of normative statuses according to the Kantian autonomy model and the relative independence of normative content from normative force as resulting from the autonomy model's asymmetric insistence on the *sufficiency* of the attitudes of the committed one to institute the normative status in question, without acknowledging also any normative dependence, in the sense of a *necessary* condition, on the attitudes of others (due to an insufficiently nuanced appreciation of the dimensions along which the autonomy model of normative force or bindingness represents an advance over the obedience model). The reciprocal recognition model he recommends to resolve this incompatibility balances moments of normative *independence* or authority of attitudes over statuses, on the part of both recognizer and recognized, with corresponding moments of normative *dependence* or responsibility to the attitudes of others, by reading both of these aspects as individually only necessary, and only jointly sufficient to institute normative statuses in the sense of giving them binding force.

7. For Hegel, social substance (a community) is synthesized by reciprocal recognition. It is articulated into individual recognizing and recognized *selves*, which are the *subjects* of normative statuses of commitment, authority, and responsibility—statuses instituted collectively by those recognitive attitudes. He sees these social recognitive practices as providing the context and background required to make sense of the Kantian process of integrating conceptual commitments so as to synthesize a rational unity of apperception. Hegel's term for the whole normatively articulated realm of discursive activity (Kant's "realm of freedom") is 'Geist': spirit. At its core is *language*: "Language is the Dasein of Geist," Hegel says.²³ That is where concepts (which for Hegel, as for Kant, is to say, norms) have their actual, public existence. (To look

²³ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, [A.W. Miller, (trans.), Oxford University Press] paragraph 652.

ahead: we might here think of Sellars's principle that "Grasp of a concept is mastery of the use of a word.")

Here is how I think the social division of conceptual labor understood according to the recognitive model of reciprocal authority and responsibility works in the paradigmatic linguistic case, so as to resolve the tension with which we have been concerned. It *is* up to me which counter in the game I play, which move I make, which word I use. But it is *not* then in the same sense up to me what the *significance* of that counter is—what other moves playing it precludes or makes necessary, what I have said or claimed by using that word, what the constraints are on successful rational integration of the commitment I have thereby undertaken with the rest of those I acknowledge. It *is* up to me what concept I apply in a particular judgment—whether I claim that the coin is made of copper or silver, for instance. But if I claim that it is copper, it is *not* then up to me what *move* I have made, what *else* I have committed myself to by using that term. So, for instance, I have thereby committed myself to the coin melting at 1084° C, but not at 1083° C—in the sense that if those claims are not true then neither is the one I made. And I have made a claim that is incompatible with saying that the coin is an electrical insulator. I can bind myself by these determinate conceptual norms because they are always already there in the always already up-and-running communal linguistic practices into which I enter as a young one. An essential part of what maintains them is the attitudes of *others*—in this case, of the metallurgical experts who would hold me responsible for those commitments on the basis of my performance, if the issue arose. My authority to commit myself using public words is the authority at once to make myself responsible for and authorize others to hold me responsible for determinate conceptual contents, about which I am *not* authoritative. It is a petition for

determinate recognition (attribution of specific commitments) by those I implicitly recognize as having, and thereby grant the authority so to recognize me. That is granting them the authority to assess the correctness or success of my rational integrative performances.

The point with which I want to close is that Hegel's social, linguistic development of Kant's fundamental insight into the essentially normative character of our mindedness provides a model of positive *freedom* that, while building on his notion of autonomy, develops it substantially. One of the central issues of classical political philosophy was always how to reconcile individual freedom with constraint by social, communal, or political norms. Kant's vision of us as rational creatures opens up space for an understanding of a kind of freedom that consists in being able constrain ourselves by norms—indeed, by norms that are rational, in the sense that they are conceptual norms: norms articulating what is a reason for what. The normative conception of positive freedom then makes possible a distinctive kind of answer to the question of how the loss of individual negative freedom—freedom from constraint—inevitably involved in being subject to institutional norms could be *rationally justified* to the individual. (Even if it could be justified from the point of view of the collective—which cannot exist without such constraints on individual behavior—it is important that it can it also be understood as rationally justifiable from the point of view of the individual herself.) In the Kantian context, such a justification could in principle consist in the corresponding increase in positive freedom.

The positive expressive freedom, the freedom *to* do something, that is obtainable only by constraining oneself by the conceptual norms implicit in *discursive* social practices, speaking a public language, is a central case where such a justification evidently is available. Speaking a

particular language requires complying with a daunting variety of norms, rules, and standards. The result of failure to comply with enough of them is unintelligibility. This fact can fade so far into the background as to be well-nigh invisible for our home languages, but it is an obtrusive, unpleasant, and unavoidable feature of working in a language in which one is *not* at home. The same phenomenon is manifest in texts that intentionally violate even a relatively small number of central grammatical and semantic norms, such as Gertrude Stein's prose. But the kind of positive freedom one gets in return for constraining oneself in these multifarious ways is distinctive and remarkable.

The astonishing empirical observation with which Chomsky inaugurated contemporary linguistic theory is that almost every sentence uttered by an adult native speaker is radically *novel*. That is, not only has that speaker never heard or uttered just that sequence of words before, but neither has anyone else—ever. “Have a nice day,” may get a lot of play in the States, and “Noch eins,” in Germany, but any tolerably complex sentence is almost bound to be new.

Quotation aside, it is for instance exceptionally unlikely that anyone else has ever used a sentence chosen at random from the story I have been telling. And this is not a special property of professor-speak. Surveys of large corpora of actual utterances (collected and collated by indefatigable graduate students) have repeatedly confirmed this empirically. And it can be demonstrated on more fundamental grounds by looking at the number of sentences of, say, thirty words or less that a relatively simple grammar can construct using the extremely minimal 5000-word vocabulary of Basic English. There hasn't been time in human history for us to have used a substantial proportion of those sentences (even the true ones), even if every human there had

ever been always spoke English and did nothing but chatter incessantly. Yet I have no trouble producing, and you have no trouble understanding, a sentence that (in spite of its ordinariness) it is quite unlikely anyone has happened to use before, such as:

We shouldn't leave for the picnic until we're sure that we've packed my old wool blanket, the thermos, and all the sandwiches we made this morning.

This capacity for *radical semantic novelty* fundamentally distinguishes sapient creatures from those who do not engage in linguistic practices. Because of it we can (and do, all the time) make claims, formulate desires, and entertain goals that no-one in the history of the world has ever before so much as considered. This massive positive expressive freedom transforms the lives of sentient creatures who become sapient by constraining themselves by linguistic—which is at base to say conceptual—norms.

So in the conceptual normativity implicit in linguistic practice we have a model of a kind of constraint—loss of negative freedom—that is repaid many times over in a bonanza of positive freedom. Anyone who was in a position to consider the trade-off rationally would consider it a once-in-a-lifetime bargain. Of course, one need not be a creature like us. As Sellars says, one always could simply *not speak*—but only at the price of having nothing to say. And non-sapient sentients are hardly in a position to weigh the pros and cons involved. But the fact remains that there *is* an argument that shows that at least *this* sort of normative constraint is rational from the point of view of the individual—that it pays off by opening up a dimension of positive expressive freedom that is a pearl without price, available in no other way. Hegel's idea is that this case provides the model that every other social or political institution that proposes to constrain our negative freedom should be compared to and measured against. The question

always is: what new kind of positive expressive freedom, what new kinds of life-possibilities, what new kinds of commitment, responsibility, and authority are made possible by the institution?

V. Conclusion

8. Kant's normative conception of intentionality moves to the center of the philosophical stage the question of how we should think about the force or bindingness ('Gültigkeit', 'Verbindlichkeit') of normative statuses such as commitment, authority, and responsibility. Kant's response is to develop and extend the Enlightenment commitment to the attitude-dependence of normative statuses in the form of his *autonomy* model, which serves also as a criterion demarcating the realm of the normative from that of the natural.²⁴ Hegel sees that the very distinction of force and content that called forth Kant's new normative conception of judging and intending demands a relative independence of those two aspects that cannot be accommodated on the autonomy model, so long as that model is construed as applying to individual normative subjects conceived in isolation from one another—that is, apart from their normative attitudes towards one another. He notices to begin with that the requisite dependence and independence claims can be reconciled if they are construed in terms of individually necessary conditions, rather than individually sufficient ones. And understanding the sort of *normative* dependence and independence in question as ways of talking about relations of *responsibility* and *authority*, he offers a *social* model of normative statuses as instituted by reciprocal recognition, according to which each cognitive relation (recognizing and being

²⁴ Notice that on the reading I am presenting here, the significance of autonomy for Kant extends far beyond the realm of the moral, or even the practical. It encompasses the whole realm of the conceptual, the theoretical and cognitive applications of concepts just as much as practical.

recognized) combines aspects of authority over and responsibility to those who are recognized or who recognize.

We have seen how the reciprocal recognition model (and criterion of demarcation) for normative bindingness underwrites all of:

- A strong version of the Enlightenment idea of the *attitude-dependence* of normative statuses, since the recognitive attitudes of individual members of a recognitive community, while individually only necessary, are understood as jointly sufficient for the institution of determinately contentful normative statuses of commitment, responsibility, and authority;
- A *social* version of the structure of *autonomy*—one that incorporates the dependence on or responsibility to the attitudes of others characteristic of the obedience model in the weaker form of merely necessary conditions—since each individual is responsible only for what she has authorized others to hold her responsible for; and
- Provision for the relative independence of the content of each commitment from the authority of the one who undertakes that commitment—a way normative statuses outrun normative attitudes.

Finally, we saw how Hegel's distinctively *linguistic* version of the social recognitive model of normativity opens up a powerful and original notion of positive *expressive* freedom and normative self-hood, as the product of the rationality-instituting capacity to constrain oneself by specifically *discursive* norms.

Chapter Three

History, Reason, and Reality

I. Introduction

1. In Chapter Two I discussed Hegel's account of what we need to *do* in order thereby to count as adopting normative statuses: committing ourselves, taking responsibility, exercising authority. To be a self in this normative sense, one must authorize others to *hold* one responsible, must petition them to *acknowledge* one's authority to commit oneself to specific claims and actions, and they must respond by actually doing so. The subjects of normative statuses, those statuses, and their communities are understood as all simultaneously synthesized by such a process of mutual recognition—the taking up of reciprocal practical normative attitudes. I motivated this social model of the nature and origin of normative force or bindingness as a response to the requirement of relative independence of the *content* of conceptual norms from their normative *force* that shows up as a criterion of adequacy for Kant's way of working out the Enlightenment idea of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses in the form of his autonomy model.

According to that model, I have a certain sort of authority over what I am genuinely responsible for or committed to. In the most basic case, it is at least a necessary condition of my *being* responsible or committed, of something *having* normatively binding authority over me,

that I *acknowledge* that responsibility, commitment, or authority. Because my normative statuses are in this way conditioned on my normative attitudes, I have a certain kind of (meta)authority concerning them; they are in this sense up to me. That is my autonomy. I am only *normatively* bound when I have bound *myself*. But for this to be intelligible as a model of normative force or bindingness, we must be able to understand what I have done as *binding* myself by undertaking a responsibility or commitment, a normative status, whose content is not simply determined by my attitudes. For if the content were so determined—if whatever *seems* right to me *is* right—then the notion that I am genuinely *bound* (that I have *bound* myself) has no application. That is to say that in order to be intelligible as determinately contentful, my autonomous (meta-)authority to bind or commit myself, to make myself responsible (a matter of the normative force of my attitudes to institute statuses), must be balanced by some authority associated with the content, with what I have become responsible *for*.

Hegel's reciprocal recognition model stems from the idea that, accepting the overarching Enlightenment commitment to the attitude-dependence of normative statuses, the way to make sense of the independent, counterbalancing (meta-)authority associated with the content to which I commit myself or for which make myself responsible is to have that authority administered by others, *to* whom I make myself responsible, *by* authorizing them to *hold* me responsible for the content I have exercised my authority to make myself responsible for. I suggested that this idea makes sense if we think about the paradigm of discursive (conceptually contentful) norms as *linguistic* norms. What I do is intelligible as binding myself by the norms associated with the concept copper when I use the word 'copper,' because in doing so I subject myself to normative assessment as to the correctness of my commitment (for instance, about the temperature at which

a particular coin would melt) according to standards of correctness that are administered by metallurgical experts.

The reciprocal recognition model of normative bindingness preserves cardinal features of the autonomy model it seeks to develop and succeed. What any subject is actually responsible for depends essentially on that subject's own attitudes—though the attitudes of others now play an equally essential role. Authority and responsibility are fully co-ordinate, and the attitudes of all the recognized recognizers are jointly sufficient to institute normative statuses. And from an engineering point of view, the social account provides a good solution to the demand for relative independence of what one is responsible for from the attitudes that make one responsible for it. Nonetheless, there are a number of important questions concerning the nature of conceptual contents that are left open by this social model of normativity as instituted by practical attitudes of reciprocal recognition. In the context of the story as I have been telling it in these here, the most general question is: How is the Hegelian social-recognitive form of the autonomy model of what one must do in order to count as thereby binding oneself normatively (adopting a normative status) related to the prior Kantian story about synthesizing an original unity of apperception (a normative self or subject of normative statuses) by rational integration?²⁵

That Kantian story, which I told in my Chapter One, pursues a distinctive pragmatist order of explanation. It starts with an account of what one must *do* in order to take responsibility for a claim or a plan—to make it one's own—that understands it as rationally integrating such a commitment with one's other theoretical and practical commitments. It then elaborates an

²⁵ One way of thinking about the relations between synthesis-as-rational-integration and synthesis-as-reciprocal recognition is to ask how we understand the significance of the expository transition from *Force and Understanding* to *Self-Consciousness* in the *Phenomenology*.

account of the nature of the conceptual contents one becomes responsible for on the basis of that notion of what it is to invest them with normative force so understood. For the ampliative and critical dimensions of the activity of rational integration by which apperceiving normative subjects are synthesized require that the conceptual contents that are integrated stand to one another in relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility. This overarching pragmatist explanatory strategy in turn imposes constraints on the way different dimensions of conceptual or intentional content are thought of as related to one another. We saw how (at least the form of) the vertical, representational dimension of content could be made intelligible in terms of the horizontal, expressive dimension—that is, how the notion that one is talking or thinking *of or about* objects could be made sense of in terms of the relations of material inferential inclusion and material incompatibility exclusion among claimable contents of the form *that-p*. Couched in the vocabulary Frege will later introduce, this is a semantic strategy of explaining reference in terms of an antecedent notion of sense, which itself is derived from a particular way of understanding normative force.

What becomes of all this when the autonomy model of normative bindingness is elaborated into the reciprocal recognition model, as I suggested in Chapter Two? At this point we have visible *two* pragmatist stories about how to get from force to content. For both the Kantian rational-integrative and the Hegelian social-recognitive models specify what sort of thing one must *do* in order thereby to count as binding oneself by conceptual norms. But how should they be understood as related to one another? And what sort of understanding do they make possible of the determinate contentfulness of the conceptual norms which the pragmatist order of explanation wants us to understand in terms of those practices, processes, or activities?

II. History, Synthesis, and Recognition

2. **It is by placing both within a larger *historical* developmental structure that Hegel fits the model of the synthesis of an original unity of apperception by rational integration together with the model of the synthesis of normative-status-bearing apperceiving selves and their communities by reciprocal recognition so as to make the discursive commitments instituted thereby intelligible as determinately contentful.** The process by which the commitments undertaken by members of a discursive cognitive community—and with them the concepts that articulate and constrain what counts as successfully integrating them—change and develop over time Hegel calls “experience” [Erfahrung]. In that process the various deliverances of sensuous immediacy—commitments practitioners acquire non-inferentially, by observation²⁶—are rationally integrated into a continually evolving whole unified by the exclusion of materially incompatible contents and the inclusion of material inferential consequences. Understanding the sense in which such development can be *expressively progressive*, in the sense of putting into claimable, thinkable form more and more of how things really are, then underwrites a distinctive and original account of aspects of semantic content that have not been addressed in my discussion of the previous models. It is that story that I want to tell in this chapter.

In Chapter One, I pointed to some features of conceptual contents—their standing to one another in relations of inclusion and exclusion, that is, material inferential consequence and incompatibility—that are presupposed by the process of synthesis as rational integration. For

²⁶ And on the practical side, inclinations they immediately find themselves with,

the contents of the concepts one applies in judging and intending must be understood as exercising a kind of *authority* over that process, which is accordingly responsible to them in the sense that those relations among contents determine standards of correctness according to which the integration of commitments is assessed as more or less correct or successful. In Chapter Two, I claimed that the social model of normative bindingness (the force of normative statuses) as instituted by attitudes of reciprocal recognition makes room in principle for an account of the authority exercised by conceptual contents to constrain the process/practice of rational integration that respects both the *attitude-dependence* of normative statuses and the requirement that the authority of conceptual contents to which a knower and agent makes himself responsible by applying concepts in judging and intending be sufficiently *independent* of the attitudes of that very knower-agent to make sense of the notion that in applying those concepts he has *bound* himself, made himself *responsible* to them, adopted a normative status. But we have *not* seen how the reciprocal recognition model makes intelligible the availability of determinate conceptual contents to the normative subjects who are rationally integrating their commitments. A striking constitutive feature of that model is the thorough-going *symmetry* of authority and responsibility that it sees as integral to the institution of those normative statuses. Applied to the case at hand, this means that the reciprocal recognition model requires that the authority of conceptual contents over the activities of practitioners (their responsibility to those contents) be balanced by a reciprocal authority of practitioners over those contents, a responsibility of those contents to the activities of the subjects of judgment and action who apply them. And that is to say that Hegel is committed to understanding the practice of acknowledging commitments by rational integration as a process not only of *applying* conceptual contents, but also as the process by which they are *determined*.

I think it useful to think about this move in connection with a later one in the philosophy of language that (not at all coincidentally) has the same structure. Carnap told a two-phase story about meaning and belief, language and theory. He thought of the activity of fixing meanings as in principle prior to the subsequent activity of endorsing claims or forming beliefs that could be expressed in terms of those meanings. First one settles the language, determines the meanings or conceptual contents associated with various expressions, and so how the world would have to be for claims formulated using those expressions to be true. In this phase, the language-user has complete authority. Then one looks at the world to see which applications of those concepts, which of the claims that can be expressed in the vocabulary one has introduced, are true. Here the whole authority lies with the world, which determines what theory couched in those terms is true. Quine objects that while this two-stage procedure might make perfect sense for introducing *artificial* languages, it is completely unrealistic when applied to *natural* languages. In that case, we cannot neatly separate the two aspects of language-use that correspond to Carnap's two-phase picture. For here we cannot appeal to some expressively stronger metalanguage in which to stipulate or otherwise fix the meanings of our expressions in advance of using them. All there is fix those meanings *is* our *use* of them. And what we use them to do, the kind of doing that is their use, is making claims²⁷ and inferences—in effect, making discursive commitments and rationally integrating them. For natural languages, and the thought conducted in them, that activity of rational integration must accordingly be able to be understood not only as consisting in the process of *applying* concepts by using expressions to make judgments, but also as the process that *determines* what concepts are expressed by those locutions: what fixes the determinate content and boundaries of those concepts.

²⁷ And undertake practical commitments, but for simplicity, I'll focus on the theoretical side here.

Carnap had followed Kant in seeing the prior determination of conceptual contents as a condition of the possibility of applying those concepts in judging—which, we have seen, is intelligible only as part of the activity of synthesizing a unity of apperception integrating such commitments into a rational whole. Hegel proposes a transformation of Kant’s picture that corresponds structurally to Quine’s replacement of Carnap’s two-phase picture with one that sees only two functions of or perspectives on a unified, ongoing discursive practice. In this respect, Hegel stands to Kant as Quine stands to Carnap. (Those who do not understand history are destined to repeat it.)

3. How could one understand the process of *applying* concepts in judgment, and their rational integration with one another by extracting consequences and extruding incompatibilities, as also being the process of *determining* the contents of those concepts, including their relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility? Here again I think it is useful to think of an analogy that is not one that Hegel himself appeals to. Consider the development of concepts of English and American common law. Unlike the creatures of statutory law, there are no explicit original definitions or initial principles laying down circumstances and consequences of application for these concepts. All there is to give them content is the actual applications that have been made of them over the years. They are case law all the way down.

The judge must decide, for each new case, *both* what to endorse—that is whether or not to take the concept in question to apply to the situation as described—*and* what the material incompatibility exclusions and consequential inclusions articulating the content of the concept

are. And for *both* these tasks the only raw materials available are provided by how previous cases have been decided. It will help to think of a simplified, stylized version of this process. Cases consist of a set of facts specified in an antecedent, non-legal vocabulary. The task in each case is to decide the applicability of some distinguished legal vocabulary (such as “strictly liable” or “contractually obliged”). The judge in each new case makes a decision, to apply or not to apply the legal concept in question, given the facts of the case. For each such decision, the judge may be conceived of as supplying also a justifying rationale. That rationale can be thought of as having two parts. First, it points to and privileges some respects of similarity and dissimilarity between the case at issue and the facts of other, previously decided, cases involving the application of the same legal concept. It might rationalize applying the concept in the present case by pointing to other cases that shared some descriptions of the facts with this one, in which the concept was applied, and pointing to differences from some prior cases in which application of the concept was rejected. The cases selected are normatively privileged by the current judge as *precedential* with respect to the present case, and the respects of similarity and dissimilarity to them that are cited delineate implicit rules of inference from the applicability of non-legal concepts in specifying the facts of the case to the applicability of the legal concepts. Second, the rationale can appeal to the explicit rationales associated with these precedential decisions. In this process, each new decision, with its accompanying rationale, including a selection of precedents, relevant considerations, and rules of inference and incompatibility, helps to determine further the conceptual content of the legal term whose application is up for adjudication.

In engaging in this kind of practice, participating in this kind of process, the judge is performing what is recognizably a kind of synthesis by rational integration. For his selection of

precedents, privileging of respects of similarity and difference, and construction of an explicit rationale for a commitment *is* the integration of that commitment with the commitments undertaken by the adjudicators of previous cases. On the ampliative side, the judge is extracting material inferential consequences from their commitments—at least according to the accompanying rationale. And on the critical side, the judge is rejecting prior commitments that would be materially incompatible with the current decision—by *not* treating those decisions, or the considerations they turn on, as valid or binding precedents. But it is clear how what the judge is doing is *also* intelligible as *developing* and *determining* the conceptual contents (thought of now in terms of relations of material consequence and incompatibility) that in turn constrain the process going forward.

What kind of structure of authority and responsibility is exhibited by a process like this? One might first be struck by the fact that the legal concepts that develop in this way are, as the point is often put, “judge-made law.” There is nothing to them that is not the cumulative result of judicial decisions to apply or not to apply the concepts in particular cases. The deciding judge exercises authority both over the content of the legal concepts being applied, and, thereby, over future judges. For in selecting the prior cases he treats as precedential and the features of the facts he takes as salient in making the decision and providing a rationale for it, the judge both further determines the content of the concept and provides potential precedents and rationales to which future judges are responsible.

But that description shows that there is also a sense in which any deciding judge is *responsible to* the content of the concept whose applicability is being assessed, by being

responsible to the authority exercised by the commitments of the prior judges whose decisions are available to provide precedents and rationales. For the justification of a judge's decision can appeal only to the authority of prior decisions, and to the conceptual content those decisions have conferred on or discovered in the legal term in question. Here the current judge is responsible to the *conceptual content* (semantic responsibility) expressed by the legal term, *by* being responsible to the *commitments* of previous judges (responsibility to, acknowledgement of the authority of the *attitudes* of *others*), in accepting the *task*-responsibility (the responsibility to *do* something) to synthesize a rational (including consequences and excluding incompatibles) *contemporary* unity *by* integrating the commitments of *past* judges. *Stare decisis*, the authority of precedent, is a matter of how the relations of material consequence and incompatibility that have actually been endorsed (normative attitudes) determine what one is actually responsible for (normative statuses).

In offering a rationale, a justification for a decision, the judge presents what is in effect a rational reconstruction of the tradition that makes it visible as authoritative insofar as, so presented, the tradition at once *determines* the conceptual content one is adjudicating the application of and *reveals* what that content is, and so how the current question of applicability ought to be decided. It is a *reconstruction* because some prior decisions are treated practically as irrelevant, non-precedential, or incorrect. It is a *rational* reconstruction insofar as there is a standing obligation that the commitments, considerations, and implicit relations of material inclusion and exclusion that are embraced by a rationale as precedential, salient, and implicit must fit together with the new commitment that is the decision being made, so as to constitute the very sort of rational unity Kant saw as the ideal or standard normatively governing the

synthesis of an original unity of apperception. The rationale is an account delineating the boundaries of the authority of the conceptual content associated with a legal term, determined by the attitudes of the prior judges' precedential decisions and rationales, to which the current judge is responsible, in the sense that that content sets the standards for normative assessments of the correctness of that judge's decision.

Here is my first major claim: **This sort of practice or process of sequential rational integration of new commitments into a constellation of prior commitments institutes normative statuses of authority and responsibility according to the model of reciprocal recognition.** This is how the model of synthesis of a unity of apperception by rational integration, which I discussed in Chapter One, is combined with the model of the synthesis of normative subjects or selves and their communities by mutual recognition, which I discussed in Chapter Two. In our example, each deciding judge recognizes the authority of past decisions, and the contents they institute and acknowledge, over the assessment of the correctness of the decision being made. That judge also exercises authority over future judges, who are constrained by that judge's decisions, insofar as they are precedential. But the currently deciding judge is also responsible to (and held responsible by) future judges, who can (by their practical attitudes) either take the current decision (and rationale) to be correct and precedential, or not. For the current judge actually to exercise the authority the decision implicitly petitions for recognition of, it must be recognized by future judges. And if that precedential authority *is* recognized by the later judges, then it is real (a normative status has been instituted by those attitudes), according to the model of reciprocal recognition. Both in acknowledging and in claiming the authority of precedent, the judge is implicitly acknowledging the authority also of future judges,

who administer that authority. For they assess whether the new commitment has been appropriately integrated with prior commitments, and decide on that basis whether to acknowledge it as authoritative, as normatively constraining future commitments in that they must be integrated with it. So each judge is recognized (implicitly) as authoritative both by prior judges (the ones whose decisions are being assessed as precedential or not) and (explicitly) by future judges (the ones who assess the current decision as authoritative, that is precedential, or not). And each judge recognizes the authority both of prior judges (to whose precedential decisions the judge is responsible) and of future judges (on whose assessments of the extent to which the present judge has fulfilled his responsibility to the decisions of prior judges the present judge's authority wholly depends). Because the future stands to the present as the present does to the past, and there is no final future, hence no final authority, every judge is symmetrically recognized and recognizing.

4. In making a decision, a judge undertakes a commitment. The model of reciprocal recognition explains how that attitude, together with the attitudes of others, institutes normative statuses of authority and responsibility intelligible as commitment. The sequences of successive rational integration of new commitments with previous ones exhibit this historical structure of reciprocal recognition. What we now need to see now is how that fact that makes sense *also* of a dimension of symmetric authority over and responsibility to *determinate conceptual contents* for *both* specific cognitive attitudes of attributing and acknowledging commitments *and* the normative statuses those attitudes institute. One of Hegel's key ideas, as I read him, is that in order to understand how the historical process of *applying* determinately contentful concepts to undertake discursive commitments (taking responsibility for those commitments by rationally

integrating them with others one has already undertaken) can also be the process of *determining* the contents of those concepts, we need a new notion of determinateness.

What we might call “*Fregean* determinateness” is a matter of sharp, complete boundaries. For Frege, each concept must be determinate in the sense that it must be semantically settled for every object, definitively and in advance of applying the concept epistemically, whether the object does or does not fall under the concept. No objects either both do and do not, or neither do nor do not, fall under it. I’ll discuss this representational dimension of conceptual content in the next section. The dimension of conceptual content that is made intelligible in the first instance by the synthetic activity of rational integration, we have seen, is articulated by relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility. What corresponds to Fregean determinateness for conceptual contents specified terms of these relations is that for every potential material inference in which any judgment that results from applying the concept figures as a premise or conclusion, it is definitively settled semantically, in advance of any actual applications, whether or not it is a good inference, and similarly for the relations of material incompatibility that hold between those judgments and any others. Here the sharp, complete boundaries that must be semantically settled definitively are those around the sets of materially good inferences and materially incompatible sets of sentences.

Hegel associates the demand for conceptual contents that are definite in this sense with the early modern tradition that culminates in Kant. It is the central element in the metaconceptual framework Hegel calls ‘*Verstand*.’ He proposes to replace this static way of thinking about the determinateness of the *relations* that articulate conceptual contents with a

dynamic account of the *process* of determining those contents, which he calls ‘Vernunft.’ Roughly, he thinks that *Verstand* is what you get if you assume that those applying concepts always already have available the contents that would result from *completing* the process of determining those contents by sequential rational integration exhibiting the historical structure of reciprocal cognitive authority and responsibility. He is very much aware of the *openness* of the use of expressions that is the practice at once of applying concepts in judgment and determining the content of the concepts those locutions express. This is the sense in which prior use does *not* close off future possibilities of development by settling in advance a unique correct answer to the question of whether a particular concept applies in a new set of circumstances. The new circumstances will always resemble any prior, settled case in an infinite number of respects, and differ from it in an infinite number of respects. There is genuine room for choice on the part of the current judge or judge, depending on which prior commitments are taken as precedential and which respects of similarity and difference are emphasized.²⁸ After all, in the absence of any prior governing statute or definition, all there is to the content of the concept in question is what has been put into it by the applications of it that have actually been endorsed or rejected. Prior uses do not determine the correctness of all possible future applications of a concept “like rails laid out to infinity,” as Wittgenstein would later put the point.

5. So is Hegel’s idea that we can take conceptual contents that turn out to be *indeterminate* in the Kant-Frege sense—because no amount of prior use settles once and for all and in principle

²⁸ This way of putting things highlights the features of the situation that encourage the temptation to think that the judge is totally unconstrained by the tradition. But to emphasize the fact that the judge is obliged to *privilege* some respects of similarity and dissimilarity, out of this wide-open field is not yet to say that every way of doing so is as good as every other, given the tradition of prior authoritative privilegeings constituted by previous judgments. Of course, judgments of better and worse in this regard, as in any other, are a matter of the attitudes of some actual participants in the practice—in this case, later judges.

which of all possible future uses are correct—and just *call* them ‘determinate,’ in his new sense? He does in the end want to do that, but not in the immediate, stipulative, ultimately irresponsible way that would have, as Russell says, “all the advantages of theft over honest toil.” Instead, he takes on the hard work needed to entitle himself to a move of this shape. For, first, he wants us to step back and ask a more basic question: what *kind of fact* is it that prior uses constrain, but do not settle, in the Kant-Frege sense, how would be correct to go on? His answer is that what is correct is a matter of a normative status, of what one is and isn’t committed or entitled to, responsible for, and what would authorize such commitments. On his account, that kind of fact is a social-recognitive fact—one, further, that is instituted by a process with the distinctive *historical* version of the structure of reciprocal recognition. Second, he uses that structure to fill in the details of a structurally new notion of determinateness, in which the Kantian *Verstand* conception takes its place as merely one recognitive moment in a larger whole.

For that to happen, the Kantian account of rational integration of new commitments into a synthetic unity with prior commitments must also be recontextualized as merely one aspect of a more general rational integrative-synthetic activity. For the original account appeals to fixed, definite relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility, construed as given, settled in advance, and determinate according to the *Verstand* framework. What Hegel adds is a *retrospective* notion of *rationaly reconstructing* the process that led to the commitments currently being integrated (not just the new one, but all the prior ones that are taken as precedential for it, too). This is a kind of genealogical justification or vindication of those commitments, showing why previous judgments were correct in the light of still earlier ones—

and in a different sense, also in the light of subsequent ones. Hegel calls this process “Erinnerung,” or *recollection*.

A good example of it is the sort of Whiggish, triumphalist, rationally reconstructed history of their disciplines to be found in old-fashioned science and mathematics textbooks. Such a story supplements an account of what we now know with an account of how we found it out. What from the point of view of our current commitments appear retrospectively as having been wrong turns, dead ends, superseded theories, and degenerating research programs are ignored—however promising they seemed at the time, however good the reasons for that were, and however much effort was devoted to them. What is picked out and presented instead is a trajectory of cumulative, unbroken progress—of discoveries that have stood the test of time. It is a story about how we found out what the real boundaries of our current concepts are, hence how they ought properly to be applied, by finding out what really follows from what and what is really incompatible with what. Hegel thinks that our activity of telling stories like this is reason’s march through history. It is the way we retrospectively *make* our applications of concepts (have been) *rational*, in the sense of responsive to discursive norms, by finding a way concretely to *take* them to be rational, in that sense. For in rationally reconstructing the tradition concept users retrospectively discern conceptual norms that are determinately contentful in the Kantian *Verstand* sense, as having been in play all along, with different aspects of their boundaries (relations of material consequence and incompatibility) discovered by correct (precedential) applications at various critical junctures in the development of the tradition.

We can think of the way the theoretical metaconceptual role played by the Hegelian notion of recollection is related to the Kantian idea of rational integration in either of two ways. We can think of Hegel as adding a complementary, cognitively dual notion alongside rational integration. *Integrating* is taking *responsibility*, making a commitment, by petitioning future concept-users to be recognized; *recollecting* is asserting *authority*, vindicating an entitlement, by recognizing past concept-users. Together the two make up a cognitive whole. But we can also think of the basic Kantian idea that what one needs to *do* to count thereby as having undertaken a discursive commitment, taken responsibility for a claim or judgment, is rationally integrating it with other commitments as being broadened and extended by the Hegelian move, so that the rational unity that must be synthesized (the “original synthetic unity of apperception”) comprises the whole developmental process by which one arrived at one’s current commitments, and not just the current time-slice of that on-going enterprise. The new kind of rational unity requires not just that one have extracted the inferential consequences of one’s commitments and extruded the incompatibilities from among them, but also that one have shown how the process by which those commitments arose out of their predecessors was a rational one. The retrospective justificatory responsibility is not only to exhibit the doxastic commitments one now acknowledges as fitting together rationally, but also to exhibit the concepts applied in those judgments—the material inferential and incompatibility commitments that articulate their conceptual contents—as the products of a rational process.

6. The new *Vernunft* conception of determinateness that Hegel proposes is an essentially *temporally perspectival* one. Looked at *retrospectively*, the process of *determining* conceptual contents (and of course at the same time the correct applications of them) by applying them

appears as a theoretical, epistemic task. One is “determining” the conceptual contents in the sense of *finding out* which are the right ones, what norms really govern the process (and so should be used to assess the correctness of applications of the concepts in question), that is, finding out what really follows from what and what is really incompatible with what. A *recollective reconstruction* of the tradition culminating in the current set of conceptual commitments-and-contents shows, from the point of view of that set of commitments-and-concepts, taken as correct, how we gradually, step-by-step, came to acknowledge (in our attitudes) the norms (normative statuses such as commitments) that all along implicitly governed our practices—for instance, what we were really, whether we knew it or not, committed to about the melting point of a piece of metal when we applied the concept copper to it. From this point of view, the contents of our concepts have always been perfectly determinate in the Kant-Frege *Verstand* sense, though we didn’t always know what they were.

Looked at *prospectively*, the process of *determining* conceptual concepts by applying them appears as a practical, constructive semantic task. By applying concepts to novel particulars one is “determining” the conceptual contents in the sense of *making it* the case that some applications are correct, by *taking it* to be the case that they are. One is drawing new, more definite boundaries, where many possibilities existed before. By investing one’s authority in an application as being correct, one authorizes those who apply the concept to future cases to do so also. If they in turn recognize one in this specific respect, by acknowledging that authority, then a more determinate norm has been socially instituted. From this point of view, conceptual norms are never fully determinate in the Kant-Frege *Verstand* sense, since there is always room for further determination. The conceptual norms are not completely indeterminate either, since a lot

of actual applications have been endorsed as correct by potentially precedent-setting judgments. All the determinateness the content has is the product of that activity.

So are the contents of empirical concepts *determinate*, in the Kant-Frege *Verstand* sense, as the retrospective epistemic perspective has it, or *indeterminate* in that sense, as the prospective semantic perspective has it? Hegel thinks that if the only metaconceptual expressive tool one has available to describe the situation is that static, nonperspectival *Verstand* conception of determinateness, the answer would have to be: “Both”—or, just as correctly: “Neither.” That those two answers do not make any sense within the metaconceptual framework of *Verstand* just shows the expressive impoverishment and inadequacy of that framework. What we should say is that concepts have contents that are both determinate and further determinable, in the sense provided by the dynamic, temporally perspectival framework of *Vernunft*. Do we *make* our concepts, or do we *find* them? Are we authoritative over them, or responsible to them? Hegel’s model entitles him to answer: “Both”. For both aspects are equally essential to the functioning of concepts in the ever-evolving constellation of concepts-and-commitments he calls “the Concept.” Authority and responsibility are co-ordinate and reciprocal, according to the mutual recognition model of normativity that is Hegel’s successor to Kant’s autonomy model. And when such a structure of reciprocal cognitive attitudes takes the special form of an historical-developmental process, the contents of those attitudes and the statuses they institute can be considered from both prospective and retrospective temporal cognitive perspectives. Those perspectives are two sides of one coin. Hegel’s *Vernunft* metaconception of determinateness is articulated by the complementary contributions of these two different aspects of one unitary process. That it is a *rational* unity, at each stage and across stages, is secured by the fact that

new commitments are undertaken by a process of rational integration in the new, broader sense that includes justifying those commitments by recollective rational reconstruction of the tradition that produced them (in addition to the critical resolution of incompatibilities and ampliative extraction of inferential consequences, which Kant had already acknowledged).

If we revert for a moment to the jurisprudential example of judges at common law, with which I introduced the historical form of reciprocal recognition, we find a striking expression of the unhelpfulness of thinking about conceptual contents according to the *Verstand* model. A classic debate in jurisprudential theory pits two views against one another. According to one, the law is what some judge takes it to be. A statement of what is legal (a normative status) is a matter-of-factual *prediction* about what a judge would decide (the judge's normative attitude). Extreme forms of legal realism, within the scope of this legal positivism, in addition insist that what the judge says is typically determined by non-legal reasons or causes. Legal decisions are brought about causally by such factors as "what the judge had for breakfast," as the slogan has it (and more realistically, by his training, culture-circle, and reading). On the other side is a view according to which the judge's job is not to *make* the law, but to *find out* what it already is (whether that is understood to be a matter of what norm the statutes or the precedents really institute, or of what natural law dictates, or any other conception). On the Hegelian view, both of these are literally "one-sided" (mis)conceptions. The former sees only the judge's authority, but not his responsibility, and the latter sees only his responsibility, but not his authority. What is needed is an account that does justice to both, to their essential interrelations with each other, and to the way the process of which both are aspects determines conceptual contents. Hegel's new notion of determinateness is constructed as a response to just these criteria of adequacy.

III. Representation and Temporal Perspective

7. The pragmatist order of explanation, which we have seen in play throughout, seeks to understand discursive *content* in terms of the rational *activity* of normative subjects—to explain the *contents* of their commitments, what they in that special and derivative sense make themselves responsible for, in terms of a more basic notion of what they are responsible for *doing*. By this point in the story, that activity is being considered in the broader sense that includes both the rational *integration* of *new* commitments and the rational *recollection* of *old* ones. The aim is to understand the relations that articulate conceptual content in terms of that kind of multifaceted process. I have said something about the Janus-faced, historically perspectival Hegelian *Vernunft* conception of determinateness of conceptual content, as regards the relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility. But these remarks address only one dimension of conceptual content: the one that in Chapter One I called the “expressive” dimension, ‘that’-intentionality. Another methodological aspiration that Hegel shares with Kant, as I read them, is to use the understanding of claimable contents in this sense (which, according to the pragmatist methodological commitment, is to be derived from thinking about what normative subjects *do* to take responsibility for such contents) in turn to explain the *representational* dimension of conceptual content: ‘of’-intentionality. We saw how this worked for Kant: how at least a formal concept of representational purport, of treating one’s claims as *about* objects, could be made intelligible in terms of the activity of rational integration constrained by relations of material inference and incompatibility. I want to close by saying how I think the corresponding Hegelian story about reference and representation goes.

In keeping with what I have presented as Kant's axial insight, representation, too, is understood in ultimately *normative* terms. What is represented is what exercises a distinctive kind of *authority* over representings of it. Representings as such must be understood to be *responsible* to what they represent; what is represented must provide a standard for normative assessment of their *correctness*, as representings. The explanatory task is to understand this special kind of representational normativity: the way what is said or thought is responsible for its correctness to what the subject thereby counts as talking or thinking *about*, in the normative sense of its being semantically or intentionally authoritative, its providing the standard for a distinctive kind of assessment of correctness.

In keeping with the overarching Enlightenment commitment to the *attitude-dependence* of normative statuses such as authority and responsibility, we need to understand what constellation of normative attitudes can *institute* the distinctively representational kind of authority and responsibility. What do knowing and acting subjects have to *do* in order thereby to count as having *deferred* or *accorded* authority over the correctness of their commitments to what they then in this distinctive normative sense count as making commitments *about*? More particularly, we want now to see how Hegel's *social* rendering of the attitude-dependence of the normative, in terms of the model of reciprocal recognition, and his account of how *historical* processes that exhibit that cognitive structure in virtue of incorporating the dual perspectival structure of prospective rational integration and retrospective rational recollection, can be understood as instituting a distinctively *representational* kind of normativity—as providing the standard for the assessment of a distinctive kind of correctness.

We do *not* need to move to this dimension of conceptual content in order to understand the idea that our judgments are *constrained*, that their evolution is subject to *friction*. For in the empirical, as opposed to the juridical, case, practitioners are trained to acquire some normative attitudes *immediately*, that is, *non-inferentially*. Under the right circumstances, properly trained observers are reliably disposed to respond to perceptible states of affairs by acknowledging commitments to corresponding perceptual judgments. The *Verstand* framework is not in a position to understand how there can be genuine *constraint* by norms (hence *friction* that constrains rational integration, going forward) unless the norms already instituted are *determinate* in the sense that they *necessitate* (*one* sense of ‘determine’) one rational unity rather than another. (Compare the jurisprudential theorists who think that if the law as previously instituted-determined does not *dictate* one unique result, then the only alternative is to understand judges as just making it up, unconstrained.) But this is a mistake. Like any other judgments, immediate perceptual judgments amount to petitions for recognition. The authority they claim may or may not be recognized by being incorporated in later rational integrations. But they exert constraint or friction just by making that petition for recognition. They help determine what one ought to be committed to, and in that sense increase empirical determinateness.

We have already in play a conception of the *sense expressed* by declarative sentences: what one thinks or says in endorsing such a sentence. That conception understands conceptual contents as articulated by relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility among those contents. Besides that, as it were *horizontal*, dimension of conceptual contents, we

are now seeking to underwrite the *vertical* dimension that depends on relations between those contents or senses and their referents in the world: what one is talking or thinking *about* in virtue of endorsing those claimable senses or contents. Hegel thinks that the representational relation between senses and the referents they normatively answer to for their correctness can be understood in terms of the prior notion of the sort of content judgments must possess in order to be eligible for integration into a rational unity of apperception, when we think about how those contents are shaped by an integrative process that includes symmetric, ultimately *recognitive* relations, both of *prospective* rational synthesis and of *retrospective* rational recollection and reconstruction of the tradition that determines them. To do that, one must make a further move.

Frege thinks of the senses we grasp in thought and their referents in reality as two different *kinds* of things—as denizens of different ontological realms. It is a central part of Hegel’s idealist strategy to take them to be things of the *same* generic kind. The conceptual contents of our thoughts are articulated by material consequential and incompatibility relations they stand in to one another. (Hegel calls these relations of “mediation” and “determinate negation.”) But facts and objective states of affairs, too, stand in consequential and incompatibility relations to one another (and objects, we have seen, are to be understood in terms of the roles they play in those relations).²⁹ The fact that the coin is metal is a consequence of the fact that it is copper. And that same fact objectively rules out the possibility that it is an electrical insulator. The principled parallel between the *deontic* modal relations of inclusion and exclusion that articulate our thought on the subjective side, and the *alethic* modal relations of

²⁹ In fact, for reasons he discusses in the *Force and Understanding* chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel is more holistic than this. In his preferred idiom, he does not talk about facts or states of affairs on the objective side, or about the determinate thoughts expressed by individual judgments on the subjective side, but only about the conceptually articulated wholes of which they are features. This holism is an important part of Hegel’s picture, but I have chosen to suppress it in the interests of expository simplicity in focusing on other aspects of his views.

inclusion and exclusion that articulate the world on the objective side, which I discussed at the end of Chapter One, define a structural conception of the conceptual according to which thought and the world thought about can both be seen to be *conceptually* structured. This *conceptual realism* about objective reality is, in the context of the other metatheoretic commitments we have been considering, just a consequence of *modal realism*: taking it that objective states of affairs really do necessitate and rule out one another. I hope it is clear at this point that, given the conception of the conceptual in play, seeing the objective, as well as the subjective realms as alike conceptually structured does not entail any claims about the causal “mind-dependence” of objective reality: of represented things on the activity of representing them. I have discussed elsewhere the crucial difference between seeing the *concept* of objective reality depending for its *sense* on our understanding of the rational activities of knowing subjects, on the one hand, and seeing the *referents* of that concept as depending on such activities, on the other. The idealism in play here is decisively of the former sort.³⁰

Hegel’s single-sort ontology of semantics takes both what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves to be conceptually articulated. He thinks that any two-sort ontology that does not acknowledge this crucial generic similarity will be dualistic. (Slogan: “A dualism is a distinction drawn in such a way as to render unintelligible crucial relations between the distinguished items.”) For it will underwrite a kind of semantic skepticism, according to which it is unintelligible that we should know how things actually are. On the single-sort approach, the content of my thought that these are my hands can be the fact itself—the two differing only in that the one has, as it were, deontic force, while the other has alethic force. (“A

³⁰ In Chapter Six of *Tales of the Mighty Dead* [Harvard University Press, 2002]: “Holism and Idealism in Hegel’s Phenomenology.”

fact is a thought that is true.”³¹) On the other hand, Hegel also thinks that to assume that we know in advance of applying concepts epistemically in experience which relations of consequential inclusion and incompatibility exclusion articulate the contents of our concepts is to fall into a kind of semantic dogmatism. The solution is to focus on the process of experience by which all of our commitments, including those that address the relations among concepts, rationally and empirically develop. It is in terms of that historical process that we are to understand

- i) the conceptual form of facts and objects—what makes them *intelligible*, what makes *knowledge* of them possible, the reason that what they are can be *said* of them,
- on the one hand, and
- ii) the objective content of claims and concepts—the way they answer to how things are and what there is as a standard of correctness, what makes it possible for them, when all goes right, to express genuine knowledge *of* something,
- as two sides of one coin, each of which can only be understood in terms of the other. In the traditional (*Verstand*) conception, the distinction between appearances and reality, phenomena and noumena, is ontological, global, and absolute. In the conception Hegel is developing (*Vernunft*), the distinction is perspectival, local, and relativized. What it is (doubly) local and relativized to is a stage in the development of the whole constellation of discursive commitments, as retrospectively viewed from another such stage.

³¹ This is, of course, Frege’s slogan, in “The Thought.” It depends on using ‘thought’ to mean *thinkable*, not *thinking*. In a way it is misleading for me to use Frege as the two-sorted foil for Hegel here. For Frege, what contrasts with thoughts (which are in the realm of sense) is objects-and-concepts (which are in the realm of reference, and are more like Tractarian facts. For Frege it is *not* the case that the world we are talking and thinking about consists of *facts*. For it does not, as it does for Hegel, consist of thinkables (not even true ones). For Frege, facts are facts *about* objects in the very same sense in which thoughts are about objects. The view I am associating with Hegel would take the sense in which facts are about objects to be secondary, derivative from and parasitic on the sense in which thoughts are. A more contemporary formulation would be that facts are about objects *only* in the sense that the sentences that express them contain singular terms that refer to objects.

Within the scope of that unitary ontology of sense and reference, Hegel is addressing the question: What do we have to *do* thereby to be taking or treating the conceptual contents (senses), which we understand by grasping their material consequential and incompatibility relations to one another, *as* subjective *appearances of* some underlying objective *reality* to which they answer for their correctness *as* appearances of *it*? His answer is that the idea of noumena, of things as they are in themselves, the reality that appears in the form of *phenomena*, can be understood practically in terms of a distinctive role in a recollectively rationally reconstructed historical sequence of phenomena. One of the senses in which what he presents is a *phenomenology* is that he starts with an account of phenomena (what things are for consciousness) and seeks to reconstruct the notion of noumena (what things are in themselves) out of the resources it provides. The result of the most recent rational integration into the constellation of one's prior commitments of some new commitment (perhaps arrived at non-inferentially by observation, or inferentially by extracting new consequences from prior commitments) is intelligible as one's commitments as to how things really are, objectively, in themselves—as being what one takes to be not just an appearance of that reality, but a *veridical* appearance, one in which things appear as they really are—when it is accompanied by the right kind of rational recollection of the process of experience that produced it. The right kind of recollection is one that picks out a trajectory through the previous results of one's actual integrations that is *expressively progressive*. That is, it must exhibit a history that both culminates in one's current view and has the form of the gradual making *explicit* of what can now retrospectively be seen all along to have been *implicit*. Doing that is showing for each previous episode (of those that are selected as, as it were, precedential, as revelatory of what one

now takes always already to have been there) how that set of commitments can be seen as a partial, and only partially correct revelation of things as they are now known (or at least taken) to be. That is, one must show how each of the recollectively privileged prior integrations made *progress* towards one's current constellation of commitments—both in the judgments that are endorsed and in the consequential and incompatibility relations taken to articulate the concepts applied in those judgments. **In taking one's current commitments as the standard to judge what counts as expressive progress, one is taking them as the *reality* of which previous constellations of endorsements were ever more complete and accurate *appearances*.** That is the lesson that the normative understanding of the representation relation teaches: what is represented is what serves as a standard for assessing what thereby, in this normative sense, counts as a representing (an appearance) of it.

Another way of putting the point is that the way the idea of reference of *appearances* to an underlying *reality* that they represent—the idea that they are appearances *of* some reality that was always already there, objectively (in the sense of being independent of the attitudes that are its appearances)—arises and is secured *for* consciousness itself is through the experience of *error*: through the realization of the untruth of appearances, as Hegel puts it. Prior error is acknowledged *internally* in each rational integration by engaging in the activity of repairing incompatible commitments (as prior ignorance is acknowledged by embracing a new consequence). And using one's current commitments as the *external* standard for assessing which such prior developments and adjustments were *successful* is treating it as presenting the reality, how things are in themselves, that all the others were more or less adequate appearances of. A successful recollective reconstruction of the tradition shows how previously endorsed

constellations of commitments were unmasked, by internal instabilities, *as* appearances, representing how things really are only incompletely and partially incorrectly, but also how each such discovery contributed to filling in or correcting the picture they present of how it really is with what they were all along representing, by more closely approximating the actual consequential and incompatibility relations of the concepts and making more correct applications of them. So they were not *mere* appearances, in that they did genuinely reveal something of how things really are. Exhibiting a sequence of precedential concept applications-by-integration as *expressively progressive*—as the gradual, cumulative, making explicit of reality as revealed by one’s current commitments, recollectively made visible as having all along been implicit—shows the prior, defective commitments endorsed, and conceptual contents deployed, as nonetheless genuinely appearances representing, however inadequately, how things really are.

There is hard, concrete work involved in the retrospective semantic enterprise of recollectively turning a *past* into a *history* of this sort, just as there is in the prospective epistemic enterprise of integrating new commitments by extracting consequences and repairing incompatibilities.³² For the provision of a rational genealogy vindicating one’s current commitments is constrained by the requirement that it suitably connect the judgments and conceptual relations previously endorsed with those currently endorsed. Hegel is trying to think through, as rigorously as the metaconceptual expressive tools he has managed to make available permit, the consequences of understanding meaning or conceptual content as articulated by non-monotonic, seriously multipremise material inferential and incompatibility relations, in the

³² As this formulation indicates (in the context of my prior claims), *both* retrospective *and* prospective perspectives are now visible as having *both* semantic *and* epistemic aspects. This structure is Hegel’s successor-conception to the Kant-Carnap picture of an antecedent activity in which semantic contents are (fully) determined, followed by a separate, subsequent activity of epistemic activity in which those contents are confronted by and applied in the world.

context of the realization (which we latecomers to the point associate with Quine, and he associated with Duhem) that those relations depend on the whole context of collateral discursive commitments. Because the material consequential and incompatibility relations both involve multiple premises and are non-monotonic, one can always take any such relation that was previously endorsed to have been all right in its context of collateral commitments, but to be infirmed by the addition of new information in later ones. Any such refinement of conceptual content itself involves a substantive commitment on the part of the one recapitulating the process of arriving at one's current constellation of commitments (including the conceptual contents that articulate them). And those commitments may themselves be found wanting by future recollecting assessors. A recollective rationalization of an integration is a petition for specific recognition, which like all such, may or may not be successful in the eyes of those to whom it is addressed.

The retrospective, recollective form of reason (the owl of Minerva that flies only at dusk, reason's march through history) constructs a sunny, optimistic, Whiggish perspective that reveals, amid the random, contingent charnel-house of our earlier discursive muddling, the emergence of an unbroken record of progress towards truth, understanding, and correct representation of how it is with the real world we turn out all along to have been thinking about and acting in. This is what Hegel means when he talks about "giving contingency the form of necessity." But it is important to remember that in the empirical case (whether we think of high theory, as when Newton's dynamics succeeds Descartes's, and Einstein's Newton's, or simple cases of discovering the straight stick in the water only to appear bent) as in the juridical, a later recollective story may substantially disagree with an earlier one. It may treat some quite

different episodes as progressive and precedential, quite different material inferences as good, different constellations of claims as incompatible. The moment of *finding*, discovering how things already were, which shows up from the perspective of each recollective reconstruction of a tradition is balanced by the moment of *making* that shows up when a new constellation of commitments must be integrated, and a new recollectively instituted tradition discovered to vindicate them. From the prospective perspective of new integrations driven by newly acknowledged commitments and consequences, and the emergence of new incompatibilities, the process of determining conceptual contents is characterized by discontinuities, caesurae, radical reassessment of old commitments, and the unraveling of previous progress. The open-endedness and determinability of conceptual contents lives in the spaces between successive recollective stories. Here we see the crookedness and zig-zags that recollective rationality must then make straight: the creative *doings* that it must make look like *findings*.

At each stage, the author who retrospectively extracts an expressively progressive trajectory through past integrations as a vindication of the current synthesis of commitments as not only synchronically, but diachronically rational exerts a distinctive kind of *authority* over the activity of past integrating recollectors, precisely by distinguishing some of them as correct and progressive, and rejecting others. But by the same token he makes himself *responsible* to the precedential authority of that previous activity, which supplies the only rationale available for his own. And that authority of the past over the present is administered on its behalf by future rational genealogists, who will pass judgment on the extent to which the current integration-and-recollection has fulfilled its responsibility to the prior tradition, and hence deserves to count as expressively progressive with respect to it. This structure of reciprocal authority and

responsibility is the historical form of *recognition*, which institutes at once both a distinctive form of *community* (a *tradition*) and individuals exhibiting determinately conceptually contentful normative statuses: commitments representing how things objectively are. Recognition now shows up in its proper form, as a *process* providing the context within which we can understand the semantic *relations* that articulate the determinate conceptual contents of discursive commitments. This conception is recognizably a development of and a successor to Kant's story (retailed in Chapter One) about how the relations of material consequence and incompatibility function and become intelligible in the context of the *activity* of rational synthesis-by-integration of a transcendental unity of apperception.

Hegel thinks that each appearance, each actual constellation of commitments and conceptual contents, will eventually turn out to be inadequate. The inexhaustibility of concrete, sensuous immediacy guarantees that we will never achieve a set of conceptual contents articulated by relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility that will not, when correctly applied, according to their own standards, at some point lead to commitments that are incompatible, according to those same standards.³³ No integration or recollection is final at the ground level. (Hegel does think a finally adequate set of philosophical and logical metaconcepts can be achieved. The *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic* each presents a kind of retrospective rational reconstructive recollection of what Hegel takes those narratives to vindicate as *the* set of metaconcepts that are necessary and sufficient to make explicit the process by which ordinary determinate empirical and practical concepts develop and are determined.) Still, one should not draw skeptical conclusions from the fallibilist meta-induction this

³³ I expand on this point in my "Sketch of Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel: Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts" *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus*, Vol 3, 2005, pp. 131-161.

observation invites, should not see the course of empirical cognition as a “path of despair.” To do that is to focus one-sidedly on just one of the reciprocal cognitive perspectives. It is to ignore the retrospective recollective perspective, which is *reason* imposing the form of *necessity* on *contingency*, making the process rational and expressively progressive by engaging in the practical labor of concretely *taking* it to be so. And it is the exhibition of the sequence of subjective appearances as a structured history comprising elements that function in that tradition not as not *mere* appearances, but as appearances that are genuinely, if only darkly, revelatory of objective reality. It is the *historical* dimension of consciousness that makes its *referential* dimension intelligible.³⁴

IV. Conclusion

8. In Chapter One I introduced Kant’s founding insight into the normative character of intentionality: his idea that what distinguishes judgements and intentional actions from the performances of merely natural creatures is that judging and acting are things we are in a distinctive sense normatively *responsible* for. I described his account of what one must *do* to take discursive responsibility (to acknowledge a commitment), as rationally integrating it with

³⁴ Hegel’s diachronic approach also provides the raw materials for a genealogical-semantic account of a concept that is otherwise quite hard to understand: the Kantian notion of a *bare*, that is unconceptualized, sensuous intuition of a particular. For this concept can be made intelligible as what is supposed to be common to all the conceptual presentations of it—not just as presented in *one* retrospective rational reconstruction of an expressively progressive tradition, but *across all* the successive rational re-writings, both those so far produced and those yet to come. Within each rational genealogy of a currently integrated constellation of commitments, what is common to the sequence of conceptualizations presented as ever-more-adequate representations is what they are thereby taken to represent: what is implicit in them all, becoming ever more explicit over the course of the expressively progressive trajectory of thought that has been traced out. That is just the conceptualization in which the process (so far) culminates. As such, it is no bare intuition, but something fully conceptualized, presenting it as a “this-such.” What gives us a grip on the concept of a bare, unconceptualized sensuous intuition (something *merely* immediate) is thinking of something as common and constant across *all* the *different* retrospective, expressively progressive rational genealogies, present and future. (I am grateful to Paul Redding for this thought.)

other such commitments, along both ampliative and critical dimensions. I attributed to him two additional large, orienting methodological commitments. One is to a pragmatist order of explanation, which moves from an account of *pragmatic force* to one of *semantic content*, understanding the conceptual contents one becomes committed to or responsible for in terms of what one becomes responsible for *doing* in judging. What one becomes responsible for doing, I said, is rational integration. That requires concepts to be articulated by the relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility that they stand in to other such contents—corresponding respectively to the ampliative and critical dimensions of the activity of rational integration. The other methodological commitment is to a semantic order of explanation that moves from this account of judgeable contents (what I called “expressive, ‘that’-intentionality”) to an account of the representational dimension of conceptual content (what I called “‘of’-intentionality”). Extracting these themes from Kant, and abstracting from his other collateral commitments, I tried to show how all these fit together.

I have ended by saying something about the form in which Hegel endorses all of these Kantian commitments, and showing how his in many ways quite different story grows out of and builds on Kant’s. In Chapter Two, I described the recognitive model of the social institution of normative bindingness and normative statuses such as responsibility, authority, and commitment. This is what Hegel proposes as a successor to Kant’s autonomy model of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses. The new theory is called for by appreciation of the complementary requirement of the relative *independence* of conceptual contents from the attitudes of endorsing or committing oneself to them. We saw how the social model of reciprocal recognition leads

Hegel to a distinctive linguistic, expressive version of Kant's idea of freedom as consisting in constraint by discursive, which is to say rational, norms.

In this chapter, I have sketched how Hegel's way of working out the pragmatist order of explanation turns on complementing Kant's prospective notion of rational integration with a retrospective notion of rational recollection, and how that leads to a description of a distinctive *historical* process that exhibits the norm-instituting structure of reciprocal recognition. By offering a certain kind of rationally reconstructed genealogy, recollective activity in a distinctive way vindicates a set of determinate, ground-level commitments—in the sense of clarifying their contents, explaining the advent of those commitments as the outcome of a rational process, and justifying them.

I mentioned two other important structural moves that provide the context for Hegel's account of the *representational* dimension of conceptual content. He rejects the Kantian two-phase account, which requires that concepts be given determinate contents by some process distinct from and antecedent to the process of applying them in making ordinary empirical judgments. And he rejects the Kantian two-sorted ontology, which distinguishes how things are for consciousness (representings, phenomena) and how they are in themselves (represented, noumena) as different *kinds* of things, the appearances conceptually articulated and the realities they represent not (a recipe, Hegel thinks, for epistemological and semantic skepticism). Finally, I closed by indicating how in the context of those further metatheoretic moves, the dual perspectival *historical* account of discursive practice—of what one must *do* in order to take rational responsibility for applications of concepts in judgment—makes sense of the

representational dimension of conceptual content.³⁵ The new notion of *reason*, expanded to include both integration and recollection, is the centerpiece of an account of what discursive practitioners must *do* in order to be intelligible as granting authority over the correctness of what they say and think (in a sense of ‘correct’ corresponding to a distinctive normative dimension of assessment they institute by those very practical attitudes) to an objective reality they count thereby in this normative sense as representing or talking and thinking *about*.

The story I have told in these first three chapters aspires to be an exercise of reason in that sense. I have tried to show how some of Hegel’s commitments can be understood as the result of rationally integrating some of Kant’s commitments, by extracting consequences, and taking on new commitments so as to resolve incompatibilities. My highly selective engagement with the thought of both takes the form of a rational recollection: picking out an expressively progressive trajectory that takes us from Kant to Hegel. Further, we are now in a position to appreciate that the whole enterprise amounts to a more comprehensive retrospective, recollective rational reconstruction and reappropriation of the thought of both—one that aims at recovering and displaying (making explicit) a complex set of interlocking ideas, sometimes only implicit in their texts, which makes clear the relevance of this aspect of their thought to significant contemporary philosophical issues and debates. The tradition I have retrospectively picked out (and given a rationale for) by selectively privileging some ampliative and critical moves as precedential, expressively progressive developments, has at its core concern with how

³⁵ Hegel’s story retains the rational-integrative activity in terms of which (at the end of Chapter One) I explained the form of objective representational purport: what one has to *do* in order thereby to be purporting to represent objects. Added to that story about triangulating on objects by rejecting incompatibles and extracting consequences is the story about rational recollection, which explains what one needs to do to be treating commitments as appearances answering for their correctness to an underlying reality they represent: retrospectively carving out a trajectory that distinguishes some rational integrations as expressively progressive. We could say that the first account explains what it is to take or treat one’s commitments as about *objects*, and the second what it is to take or treat them as *about* objects, in the sense of answering for their correctness to how it is with what there really is.

conceptual *content*, in various senses, can be understood in terms of its role in discursive *activity* more generally.³⁶ I think that a variety of specific lessons that are valuable for our own thinking about this topic today emerge when we carve out this line of thought from the myriad contingent collateral commitments with which it is entangled in the original presentations. And I think, hope, and trust that there are deeper and more general philosophical lessons we can find in the way this tradition embeds these relatively narrow and technical semantic concerns in the broader context of considerations provided by larger philosophical topics such as those I have indicated in the titles of these first three chapters: norms, selves, concepts, autonomy, community, freedom, history, reason, and reality.

³⁶ I am encouraged by the extent to which important aspects of the tradition I have reconstructed here can also be found in the work of various influential neo-Kantians, particularly Cohen and the later Windelband. But that is another story.

Part Two

Knowing and Representing:

Reading (between the lines of)

Hegel's Introduction to the Phenomenology

Chapter Four

Conceptual Realism and the Semantic Possibility of Knowledge

I. Classical Representational Epistemology

1. Hegel opens the first paragraph of his *Introduction* by introducing a model of cognitive faculties that he supposes will be most familiar to his readers in its Kantian form: Knowledge...tends to be regarded as the instrument with which one takes hold of the absolute or as the medium through which one discovers it.³⁷

He thinks no account that has this general shape can meet basic epistemological criteria of adequacy. By showing that, he hopes to make his readers appreciate the need for an alternative model, which he will then supply.

The general character of his complaint against construing cognitive faculties on the instrument-or-medium model seems clear enough. He offers a two-fold summary. That model leads to:

- a) the conviction that there is an absurdity in the Concept of even beginning a process of knowledge designed to gain for consciousness that which is in-itself, and
- b) that there is a strict line of demarcation separating knowledge and the absolute.³⁸

³⁷ [73]

The first objection alleges that theories of the sort he is addressing must lead to a kind of skepticism: a failure to make intelligible the idea of knowing how things are in themselves. The second complaint points to a diagnosis of the reason for this failure: the model excavates a gulf separating consciousness from what it is consciousness of.

He expands on both these points. He fills in the charge that instrument-or-medium theories lead to skepticism by saying:

[I]f knowledge is the instrument to take hold of the absolute essence, one is immediately reminded that the application of an instrument to a thing does not leave the thing as it is, but brings about a shaping and alteration of it. Or, if knowledge is not an instrument for our activity, but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive this truth as it is in itself, but as it is in and through this medium. In both cases we employ a means which immediately brings about the opposite of its own end; or, rather, the absurdity lies in our making use of any means at all.³⁹

In either case, there is going to be a distinction between what things are for consciousness (the product of the exercise of cognitive faculties) and what they are in themselves (the raw materials on which the cognitive faculties are exercised). Something about the character of this distinction, Hegel seems to be arguing, is incompatible with what things are for consciousness according to such a picture counting as genuine knowledge of how things really are (“in themselves”).

³⁸ [M73]

³⁹ [M73]

He elaborates the problem diagnosed in passage (b) above. It is that the instrument-or-medium picture

presupposes notions *about knowledge* as an instrument and a medium, and also the notion that there is a *difference between ourselves and this knowledge*; but above all, it presupposes that the absolute *stands on one side* and that *knowledge*, though it is *on the other side*, for itself and separated from the absolute, is nevertheless something real. Hence it assumes that knowledge may be true despite its presupposition that knowledge is outside the absolute and therewith outside the truth as well. By taking this position, what calls itself the fear of error reveals itself as a fear of the truth.⁴⁰

It is apparently of the essence of the instrument-or-medium model to see there being such a “difference,” “separation,” two “sides” of one divide, and to understand the job of cognitive faculties to consist in bridging that divide.

This, he thinks, is just the predicament that calls forth an inquiry into the nature of the transformation effected by the exercise of cognitive faculties. But he claims that it is a mistake to think such an investigation can remove the difficulty.

To be sure, it does seem that an acquaintance with the way the instrument functions might help overcome this difficulty. For then it would seem possible to get the truth in its purity simply by subtracting from the result the instrument’s part in that representation of the absolute which we have gained through it. In fact, however, this correction would only lead us back to our point of departure.

For [i], if we remove from a thing which has been shaped by an instrument the

⁴⁰ [74]

contribution of that instrument to it, then the thing (in this case the absolute) is for us exactly as it was before this now obviously superfluous effort. Or [ii], were the absolute only to be brought a bit *closer* to us by an instrument, perhaps as a bird is trapped by a lime-twig, without being changed at all, it would surely laugh at this ruse if it were not, in and for itself, already close to us of its own accord. For in this case knowledge itself would be a ruse, pretending through its multifarious effort to do something other than merely bring forth a relation which is immediate and thus effortless. Or [iii], if the examination of knowledge, which we now represent as a medium, makes us acquainted with the law of light- refraction in the medium, it is likewise useless to subtract this factor from the result; for knowledge, through which the truth touches us, is the ray of light itself rather than its refraction; and if this be subtracted, we would be left with no more than an indication of pure direction or empty place.⁴¹

The argument here seems to be that if there is a gulf separating how things are in themselves from how they are for consciousness that requires the operation of cognitive faculties to bridge it or re-unite the two sides, then all that investigation of those faculties can do is re-institute the gulf or separation.

I think we can see in these passages the general shape of an argument. But it is hazy, and it is hard to discern both the exact outlines of the class of views it targets and just how the criticism of them is supposed to work. (The haziness of the argument is due partly to the compression of its exposition, and partly to the metaphorical terms in which it is conducted.) To fill in the details, one would have to specify what criteria of adequacy for epistemological

⁴¹ [73]

theories Hegel is insisting on, what class of theories he claims cannot satisfy those criteria, what features of those theories are responsible for that failure, and how, exactly, the argument for that conclusion works. In the rest of this chapter, I offer one way of sharpening along these four dimensions the argument Hegel is putting on the table here, and an initial characterization of the shape of the alternative model that Hegel proposes to replace the instrument-or-medium model.

2. To get a better specification of the range of epistemological theories that fall within the target-area of Hegel's argument (metaphorically labeled as the "instrument-or-medium" model), it will help to begin further back. The theories he is addressing are *representational* theories of the relations between appearance and reality. Representation is a distinctively modern concept. Premodern (originally Greek) theories understood the relations between appearance and reality in terms of *resemblance*. Resemblance, paradigmatically one of the relations between a picture and what it pictures, is a matter of sharing properties. A portrait resembles the one portrayed insofar as it shares with its object properties of color and shape, for instance of nose, ear, and chin (perhaps as seen from some perspective). The thought behind the resemblance model is that appearance is veridical insofar as it resembles the reality it is an appearance of. Insofar as it does not resemble that reality, it is a false appearance, an error.

The rise of modern science made this picture unsustainable. Copernicus discovered that the reality behind the appearance of a stationary Earth and a revolving Sun was a stationary Sun and a rotating Earth. No resemblance, no shared properties there. The relationship between reality and its appearance here has to be understood in a much more complicated way. Galileo produces a massively productive and effective way of conceiving physical reality in which periods of time

appear as the lengths of lines and accelerations as the areas of triangles. The model of resemblance is of no help in understanding *this* crucial form of appearance. The notion of shared property that would apply would have to be understood in terms of the relations between this sort of mathematized (geometrized) theoretical appearance and the reality it is an appearance of. There is no antecedently available concept of property in terms of which that relationship could be understood.⁴²

Descartes came up with the more abstract metaconcept of representation required to make sense of these scientific achievements—and of his own. The particular case he generalized from to get a new model of the relations between appearance and reality (mind and world) is the relationship he discovered between algebra and geometry. For he discovered how to deploy algebra as a massively productive and effective appearance of what (following Galileo) he still took to be an essentially geometrical reality. Treating something in linear, discursive form, such as “ $ax + by = c$ ” as an appearance of a Euclidean line, and “ $x^2 + y^2 = d$ ” as an appearance of a circle allows one to calculate how many points of intersection they *can* have and what points of intersection they *do* have, and lots more besides. These sequences of symbols do not at all *resemble* lines and circles. Yet his mathematical results (including solving a substantial number of geometrical problems that had gone unsolved since antiquity, by translating them into algebraic questions) showed that algebraic symbols present geometric facts in a form that is not only (potentially and reliably) *veridical*, but conceptually *tractable*.

In order to understand how strings of algebraic symbols could be useful, veridical, tractable appearances of geometrical realities (as well as the Copernican and Galilean antecedents of his

42 The idea of couching this story as the transition from a model of *resemblance* to one of *representation* is from the first chapter of my long-time colleague John Haugeland’s *Artificial Intelligence: The Very Idea* [MIT—Bradford Press, 1989].

discoveries), Descartes needed a new way of conceiving the relations between appearance and reality. His philosophical response to the scientific and mathematical advances in understanding of this intellectually turbulent and exciting time was the development of a concept of representation that was much more abstract, powerful, and flexible than the resemblance model it supplanted. He saw that what made algebraic understanding of geometrical figures possible was a global *isomorphism* between the whole system of algebraic symbols and the whole system of geometrical figures. That isomorphism defined a notion of form shared by the licit manipulations of strings of algebraic symbols and the constructions possible with geometric figures. In the context of such an isomorphism, the particular material properties of what now become intelligible as representings and representeds become irrelevant to the semantic relation between them. *All* that matters is the correlation between the rules governing the manipulation of the representings and the actual possibilities that characterize the representeds. Inspired by the newly emerging forms of modern scientific understanding, Descartes concluded that this *representational* relation (of which resemblance then appears merely as a primitive species) is the key to understanding the relations between mind and world, appearance and reality, quite generally.

This was a fabulous, tradition-transforming idea, and everything Western philosophers have thought since (no less on the practical than on the theoretical side) is downstream from it, conceptually, and not just temporally—whether we or they realize it or not. But Descartes combined this idea with another, more problematic one. This is the idea that if *any* things are to be known or understood representationally (whether correctly or not), by being represented, then there must be *some* things that are known or understood *nonrepresentationally, immediately, not*

by means of the mediation of representings. If representings could only be known representationally, by being themselves in turn represented, then a vicious infinite regress would result. For we would only be able to know about a represented thing by knowing about a representing of it, and could only count as knowing about it if we already knew about a representing of it, and so on. In a formulation that was only extracted explicitly centuries later by Josiah Royce, if even *error* (*misrepresentation*), never mind knowledge, is to be possible, then there must be something about which error is *not* possible—something we know about *not* by representing it, so that error in the sense of misrepresentation is not possible. If we can know (or be wrong about) anything representationally, by means of the mediation of representings of it, there must be some representings that we grasp, understand, or know about *immediately*, simply by *having* them.

The result was a *two-stage*, representational story that sharply distinguished between two kinds of things, based on their intrinsic intelligibility. Some things, paradigmatically physical, material, extended things, can by their nature only be known by being *represented*. Other things, the contents of our own minds, are by nature *representings*, and are known in another way entirely. They are known *immediately*, not by being represented, but just by being *had*. They are intrinsically intelligible, in that their mere matter-of-factual occurrence counts as knowing or understanding something. Things that are by nature knowable only as represented are not in this sense intrinsically intelligible. Their occurrence does not entail that anyone knows or understands anything.

As I have indicated, I think that Descartes was driven to this picture by two demands. On the one hand, making sense of the new theoretical mathematized scientific forms in which reality could appear—the best and most efficacious forms of understanding of his time—required a new, more abstract notion of representation and the idea that it is by an appropriate way of representing things that we know and understand them best. So we must distinguish between representings and representeds, and worry about the relations between them in virtue of which manipulating the one sort of thing counts as knowing or understanding the other. On the other hand, such a two-stage model is threatened with unintelligibility in the form of a looming infinite regress of explanation if we don't distinguish between how we know representeds (by means of our relations to representings of them) and how we know at least some representings (immediately, at least, not by being related to representings of them). The result was a two-stage model in which we are immediately related to representings, and in virtue of their relation to representeds stand in a mediated cognitive relation to those represented things. The representings must be understood as intrinsically and immediately intelligible, and the representeds as only intelligible in a derivative, compositional sense: as the result of the product of our immediate relations to representings and their relations to representeds.

I want to say that it is this epistemological model that Hegel takes as his target in his opening remarks in the *Introduction* of the *Phenomenology*. What he is objecting to is two-stage, representational theories that are committed to a fundamental difference in intelligibility between appearances (representings, how things are for consciousness) and reality (representeds, how things are in themselves), according to which the former are immediately and intrinsically intelligible, and the latter are not. The gulf, the “difference,” “separation,” the two “sides” of

one divide separating appearance and reality, knowing and the known, that he complains about is this gulf of intelligibility. His critical claim is that any theory of this form is doomed to yield skeptical results.

3. Of course, Descartes's view is not the only one Hegel means to be criticizing. Kant, too, has a two-stage, representational theory. Cognitive activity needs to be understood as the product of both the mind's activities of manipulating representations (in the sense of representings) and the relations those representings stand in to what they represent. Both what the mind does with its representations and how they are related to what they represent must be considered in apportioning responsibility for features of those representings to the things represented, as specified in a vocabulary that does not invoke either the mind's manipulation of representations or the relations between representings and representeds (that is, things as they are "in themselves" [an sich]) or to the representational relations and what the cognitive faculties do with and to representings. The latter for Kant yields what the represented things are "for consciousness," in Hegel's terminology: contentful representings.

Kant's theory is not the same as Descartes's, but shares the two-stage representational structure that distinguishes the mind's relation to its representings and its relation to representeds that is mediated by those representings. Although Kant does sometimes seem to think that we have a special kind of access to the products of our own cognitive activity, he does not think of our awareness of our representings as *immediate* in any recognizably Cartesian sense. Awareness is apperception. The minimal unit of apperception is judgment. To judge is to integrate a conceptually articulated content into a constellation of commitments exhibiting the distinctive

synthetic unity of apperception. Doing that is extruding from the constellation commitments incompatible with the judgment being made and extracting from it inferential consequences that are then added to that constellation of commitments. This is a process that is mediated by the relations of material incompatibility and consequence that relate the concepts being applied in the judgment to the concepts applied in other possible judgments.

So Kant shares with Descartes the two-stage representational structure, but does not take over the idea that our relation to our own representations is one of immediate awareness.⁴³ His view still falls within the range of Hegel's criticisms, however, because he maintains the differential intelligibility of representings and representeds. Representings are as such intelligible, and what is represented is, as such, not. I will call this commitment to a "*strong* differential intelligibility of appearance and reality: the claim that the one is the right sort of thing to be intelligible, and the other is not. Kant has a new model of intelligibility: to be intelligible is to have a content articulated by *concepts*. It is the concepts applied in an act of awareness (apperception) that determine what would count as successfully integrating that judgment into a whole exhibiting the distinctive synthetic unity of apperception. But the conceptual articulation of judgments is a form contributed by the cognitive faculty of the understanding. It is not something we can know or assume to characterize what is represented by those conceptual representings, when the representeds are considered apart from their relation to such representings: as they are in

43 Descartes's commitment to the mind's awareness of its own representings being immediate in the sense of nonrepresentational (justified by the regress of representation argument) did not preclude his treating the contents of those representings as essentially involving their relations to other such contents. Indeed, his view of representation as a matter of isomorphism between the whole system of representings and the whole system of representeds entails just such a semantic holism. He never, I think, resolves the residual tension between the immediacy of his pragmatics (his account of what one is doing in thinking) and the holism of his semantics. Kant's pragmatics of judging as integration into a whole exhibiting the synthetic unity of apperception is not similarly in tension with his version of the holistic semantic thought.

themselves. On Hegel's reading, Kant is committed to a gulf of intelligibility separating our representings from what they are representings of, in the form of the view that the representings are in conceptual shape, and what is represented is not.

Just to remind ourselves how much is at stake in Hegel's criticism of two-stage representational theories of the relations between appearance and reality that are committed to the differential intelligibility of the relata, it is worth thinking in this connection also about Frege. For Frege, discursive symbols *express* a sense [*Sinn*] and thereby *designate* a referent [*Bedeutung*]. Senses are what is grasped when one understands the expression, and referents are what is thereby represented: what expressing that sense is talking or thinking *about*. A sense is a representing in that it is a "mode of presentation" [*Art des Gegebenseins*] of a referent. No more than Kant does Frege construe grasp of a sense as immediate in a Cartesian sense—according to which the mere occurrence of something with that sense counts as the mind's knowing or understanding something). Grasping a judgeable content requires mastering the inferential and substitutional relations it stands in to other such contents. But like Descartes and Kant, Frege thinks that grasping senses, understanding representations as representations, does not require representing them in turn, and that representings in the sense of senses are graspable in a sense in which what they represent is not (apart from the special case of indirect discourse, where what is represented is senses). So if, as I have claimed, Hegel's argument is intended to be directed at two-stage representational models committed to treating representings as intelligible in a sense in which representeds are in general not, then it seems Fregean sense-reference theories, as well as the Kantian and Cartesian versions, will be among the targets.

II. Genuine Knowledge and Rational Constraint

4. In order to see whether there is an argument of the sort Hegel is after that tells against theories of this kind—two-stage representational theories committed to the strong differential intelligibility of representings and representeds—we must next think about what criteria of adequacy for such theories Hegel is appealing to. In general, we know that what Hegel thinks is wrong with them is that they lead to skepticism. Further, he tells us that what he means by this is that such theories preclude knowing things as they are “in themselves.” I think what is going on here is that Hegel learned from Kant that the soft underbelly of *epistemological* theories is the *semantics* they implicitly incorporate and depend upon. And he thinks that two-stage representational theories committed to the strong differential intelligibility of representings and what they represent *semantically* preclude genuine knowledge of those representeds. I will call the criterion of adequacy on epistemological theories that Hegel is invoking here the “Genuine Knowledge Condition” (GKC). Obviously, a lot turns on what counts as *genuine* knowledge. But it is clear in any case that this requirement demands that an epistemological theory not be committed to a semantics—in particular, a theory of representation—that when looked at closely turns out to rule out as unintelligible the very possibility of knowing how things really are (“genuine” knowledge). This is what I take Hegel to mean when he says that epistemological theories of this kind show themselves as surreptitiously expressing a “fear of the truth.” I do not take it that the very existence of a contrast between how we know what is represented and how we know representings by itself demonstrates such a failure. His specific claim is that when that difference is construed as one of intelligibility in the strong sense—representings are intrinsically intelligible and representeds are not—then skepticism about

genuine knowledge is a consequence. And he takes from Kant the idea that intelligibility is a matter of *conceptual* articulation: to be intelligible is to be in conceptual shape. If this reading is correct, then Hegel's argument must show that to satisfy the Genuine Knowledge Condition, an epistemological theory must treat not only appearance (how things subjectively are, for consciousness), but also reality (how things objectively are, in themselves) as conceptually articulated. Again, what could count as a good argument for this claim obviously turns on what is required to satisfy that requirement.

Both resemblance and representation models of the relations between appearance and reality have a story about what *error* consists in. That is what happens when antecedently intelligible properties are not shared, so that resemblance breaks down, or when there are local breakdowns in the globally defined isomorphism between the systems of representings and representeds. In the middle paragraphs of the *Introduction*, in which Hegel begins to present his alternative to two-stage representational epistemological theories committed to strong differential intelligibility of representings and representeds, the treatment of error looms large. (This is the topic of Chapter Five.) I think we can take it as an implicit criterion of adequacy Hegel is imposing on epistemological theories that they make intelligible the phenomenon, not only of genuine knowledge, but also of error. I will call this the Intelligibility of Error Condition (IEC). The Genuine Knowledge Condition and the Intelligibility of Error Condition are *epistemological* constraints. The semantics presupposed by or implicit in an epistemological theory must not preclude the intelligibility either of genuine knowledge, or of error: being wrong about how things really are. We must be able to understand both what it is for what there is to appear as it is, and for it to appear as it is not. An epistemological theory that does not make both of these

intelligible is not adequate to the phenomenon of our efforts to know and understand how things really are.

Approaching epistemology from this semantic direction suggests that behind these epistemological constraints are deeper semantic ones. I think that is in fact the case here. We cannot read these off of Hegel's extremely telegraphic remarks in the text of the opening paragraphs of the *Introduction*, but must infer them from the solution he ultimately proposes to the challenges he sets out there. First is what we could (looking over our shoulders at Frege) call the Mode of Presentation Condition (MPC). This is the requirement that appearances (senses, representings) must be essentially, and not just accidentally, appearances *of* some purported realities. One does not count as having grasped an appearing unless one grasps it *as* the appearance of something. When all goes well, grasping the appearance must count as a way of knowing about what it is an appearance of. Appearances must make some reality semantically visible (or otherwise accessible). The claim is not that one ought not to reify appearances, think of them as things, but rather, for instance, adverbially: in terms of being-appeared-to-*p*-ly. That is not a silly thought, but it is not the present point. It is that if the epistemological Genuine Knowledge Condition is to be satisfied by a two-stage, representational model, representings must be semantic presentations of representeds in a robust sense in which what one has grasped is not a representation unless it is grasped as a representation of some represented. Further along we'll see how Hegel, following Kant, understands this requirement: taking or treating something in practice as a representing is taking or treating it as subject to *normative* assessment as to its *correctness*, in a way in which what thereby counts as represented serves as a *standard*.

A second semantic constraint on epistemological theories that I take to be implicitly in play in Hegel's understanding of the epistemological GKC is that if the representational relation is to be understood semantically in a way that can support genuine knowledge, it must portray what is represented as exerting *rational* constraint on representings of it. That is, how it is with what is represented must, when the representation relation is not defective, provide a *reason* for the representing to be as it is. What we are talking (thinking) about must be able to provide reasons for what we say (think) about it. We can call this the Rational Constraint Condition (RCC).

Though he does not argue for this constraint in the *Introduction*, I think in many ways it is the key premise for the argument he does offer. The thought is that the difference between merely responding differentially to the presence or absence of a fact or property and *comprehending* it, having thoughts that are *about* it in the sense that counts as knowledge if everything goes well, depends on the possibility of that fact or property being able to serve for the knower as a reason for having a belief or making a commitment. The central sort of semantic aboutness depends on being able *rationally* to take in how things are, in the sense of taking them in *as* providing reasons for our attitudes.

Hegel learns from Kant to think about representation in *normative* terms. What is represented exercises a distinctive kind of *authority* over representings. Representings are *responsible* to what they represent. What is represented serves as a kind of *normative standard* for assessments of the *correctness* of what count as representings of it (correct or incorrect) just in virtue of being subject to assessments of their correctness in which those represented provide the standard. The RCC adds that the standard, what is represented, must provide *reasons* for the assessments. In fact, in the context of Kant's and Hegel's views, this is not a further commitment. For neither of

them distinguishes between norms (or rules) and norms (or rules) that are *rational* in the sense of being *conceptually* articulated. *All* norms are understood as conceptual norms. Norms or rules and concepts are just two ways of thinking about the same thing. Conceptual norms are norms that determine what is a reason for what. For a norm to be contentful is for it to have *conceptual* content: a matter of what it can be a reason for or against and what can be a reason for or against it. This is the only kind of content they acknowledge. The German Idealists are rationalists about norms, in that norms (rules) are contentful exclusively in the sense of conceptually contentful.

The Rational Constraint Condition accordingly fills in the sense of ‘representation’ or ‘aboutness’ on which the Mode of Presentation Condition depends. And these two semantic conditions provide the crucial criteria of adequacy for satisfying the two epistemological conditions: the Genuine Knowledge Condition and the Intelligibility of Error Condition. For the intelligibility of genuine knowledge of or error about how things really are turns on the rational normative constraint those realities exert on what count as appearances or representings of those realities just insofar as they are subject to normative assessments of correctness and incorrectness (knowledge or error) in which those realities serve as the standard, in the sense of providing reasons for those assessments.

5. Supposing that these four conditions represent the relevant criteria of adequacy for epistemological theories (and their implicit semantics), what is the argument against two-stage representational theories that are committed to a strong difference of intelligibility between representings and representeds (appearance and reality)? Why can’t theories of this form satisfy the criteria of adequacy? It is characteristic of two-stage theories, not just Descartes’s but also

those of Kant and Frege, that they incorporate a distinction between two ways of knowing or understanding things. Some things are known (only) representationally: by being represented. Other things—at least some representings, according to the regress argument—are known nonrepresentationally: in some way other than by being represented. If we are interested in investigating cognitive faculties in the context of theories like this, we are interested in the representation relation. For cognitive faculties are the instrument or medium that produces representings of the real. But then we must ask: is the representational relation, the relation between representings and what they represent, itself something that is known representationally, or nonrepresentationally? If it is itself something that is knowable or intelligible only by being represented, it seems that we are embarked on a vicious Bradleyan regress. The epistemological enterprise is not intelligible unless we can make sense of the relation between representations of representational relations and that representational relation, and then representations of *that* relation, and so on. Until we have grasped all of that infinite chain of representings of representings of representings... we are not in a position to understand the representational relation, and hence not the “instrument or medium” of representation. Semantic skepticism—skepticism about what it is so much as to *purport* to represent something—must then be the result. This argument is essentially the Cartesian regress-of-representation argument for nonrepresentational knowledge of representings, applied now not just to the representings, but to the relation they stand in to what they represent.

So if epistemology, and so knowledge, is to be intelligible, it seems that within this sort of framework we must embrace the other horn of the dilemma, and take it that the representation relation is something that can itself be known or understood *nonrepresentationally*—that in this

respect it belongs in a box with the representations or appearances themselves. Responding this way to the dilemma concerning our understanding of the representational relation is, in effect, acknowledging the Mode of Presentation Condition. For it is saying that part of our nonrepresentational understanding of appearances (representings) must be understanding them *as* appearances (representings) *of* something. Their representational properties, their ‘of’-ness, their relation to what they at least purport to represent, must be intelligible in the same sense in which the representings themselves are.

The Rational Constraint Condition says that for appearances to be intelligible as appearances, representings, modes of presentation, *of* something they must be intelligible as *rationally* constrained by what they then count as representing. This means that what is represented must be intelligible as providing *reasons* for assessments of correctness and incorrectness of appearances or representings. Reasons are things that can be thought or said: cited *as* reasons, for instance, for an assessment of a representing as correct or incorrect, as amounting to knowledge or error. That is to say that what provides reasons for such assessments must itself, no less than the assessments, be in *conceptual* form. Giving reasons for undertaking a commitment (for instance, to an assessment of correctness or incorrectness) is endorsing a sample piece of reasoning, an inference, in which the premises provide good reasons for the commitment. It is to exhibit premises the endorsement of which entitles one to the conclusion. So the reasons, no less than what they are reasons for, must be conceptually articulated.

Put another way, appearances are to be intelligible, graspable, in the sense that they are conceptually articulated. Understanding the judgment that things are thus-and-so requires

knowing what concepts are being applied, and understanding those concepts. One only does that insofar as one practically masters their role in reasoning: what their applicability provides reasons for and against, and the applicability of what other concepts would provide reasons for or against their applicability. If the relation between appearances and the realities they are appearances of—what they represent, how they represent things as being (“thus-and-so”)—is to be intelligible in the same sense that the appearances themselves are (so that a regress of representation is avoided), this must be because that relation itself is a *conceptual* relation: a relation among concepts or concept-applications, a relation between things that are conceptually articulated.

The conclusion is that if the Rational Constraint Condition must be satisfied in order to satisfy the Genuine Knowledge Condition and the Intelligibility of Error Condition (if the RCC really is a semantically necessary condition on satisfying these epistemological criteria of adequacy)—perhaps because it is a necessary condition of satisfying the Mode of Presentation Condition, which itself is a necessary semantic condition on satisfying the GKC and the IEC—then those conditions cannot be satisfied by a two-stage representational theory that is committed to the strong differential intelligibility of representing and represented. If not only representings, but the representation relation must be intelligible in a sense that requires their conceptual articulation, then both ends of the representation relation must be conceptually contentful. Only in that way is it intelligible how what is represented can exert rational constraint on representings, in the sense of providing *reasons* for assessments of their correctness or incorrectness.

III. A Non-Psychological Conception of the Conceptual

6. I have been working to find structure beneath what appears on the telegraphic surface of the text of the opening couple of paragraphs of Hegel's *Introduction*. I claim so far only to have sketched a potentially colorable argument. Further exploration is required of the reasons for accepting the RCC, which this exposition reveals as the principle load-bearing premise. A key component of that enterprise would be clarifying the concepts of conceptual articulation and conceptual content—what the RCC says must characterize both representing and represented, which commitment to a representational theory with a strong difference of intelligibility denies. It will help to begin on this latter task by looking at what sorts of theories might be thought to be available, once the strong difference of intelligibility of appearance and reality has been denied—that is, once one is committed to not excavating a gulf of intelligibility between representings and what they represent.

One place to begin is with Frege's proposed definition in "The Thought": "a fact is a thought that is true."⁴⁴ Thoughts for Frege are the senses of declarative sentences. They are claims, in the sense of claimable contents, rather than claimings. A fact, he is saying, is not something that *corresponds* to or is *represented* by such a sense. It just *is* such a sense; one that is true. Facts are a subset of claimables, senses, representings, cognitive appearings. Of course, Frege retains the two-stage representational model for the relation between senses and their referents—for thoughts, truth-values. And this matters for what he thinks senses *are*: modes of presentation of referents. But as far as the relations between thoughts and *facts* are concerned, he does not

44 Gottlob Frege "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry" [*Mind*, New Series, Vol. 65, No. 259. (Jul., 1956), pp. 289-311.]

appeal to that model. Again, Wittgenstein says: “When we say, and mean, that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: this—is—so.”⁴⁵ In these cases, the content of what we say, our meaning, *is* the fact. Such an approach is sometimes talked about under the title of an “identity theory of truth.”⁴⁶ It is sometimes attributed, under that rubric, to John McDowell.⁴⁷

On such an approach, there is no principled gulf of intelligibility between appearance and reality (mind and world), because when all goes well the appearances inherit their content from the realities they are appearances of. Thoughts (in the sense of thinkings) can share their content with the true thoughts (in the sense of thinkables) that are the facts they represent. (As indicated above, this is not the way Frege would put things. For him, facts are a kind of representing, not in the first instance of representeds.) Representings are distinct from representeds, so the two-stage representational model is still endorsed. But they are understood as two forms in which one content can be manifested.

What is most striking about views of this stripe is that they are committed to the claim, as McDowell puts it in *Mind and World*, that “the conceptual has no outer boundary.” What is thinkable is identified with what is conceptually contentful. But the objective facts, no less than the subjective thinkings and claiming about them, are understood as themselves already in

45 *Philosophical Investigations* [ref.] §95.

46 For instance, by Jennifer Hornsby: (1997), ‘Truth: The Identity Theory’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* XCVII, pp. 1-24; reprinted in Michael P. Lynch (ed.), *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 663-81. Also J. Dodd (2000), *An Identity Theory of Truth* (London: Macmillan).

47 For instance, by J. Dodd “McDowell and identity theories of truth” *Analysis* (1995) 55(3): 160-165. I doubt McDowell would be happy with this characterization of his views in *Mind and World* about the necessity of understanding ourselves as conceptually open to the layout of reality.

conceptual shape. The early Wittgenstein, no less than the later, thought of things this way. “The world is everything that is the case, the totality of facts....” And what is the case can be *said* of it. Facts are essentially, and not just accidentally, things that can be *stated*.⁴⁸ Views with these consequences provide a very friendly environment in which to satisfy the Rational Constraint Condition and so (in the context of a suitable Kantian normative understanding of aboutness) the Mode of Presentation Condition on understandings of the relations between cognitive appearances and the realities of which they are appearances.

The defensibility and plausibility of this sort of approach depend principally on the details of the understanding of the (meta-)concept of the conceptual (conceptual contentfulness, conceptual articulation) in terms of which it is explicated.⁴⁹ For on some such conceptions, it is extremely implausible and indefensible. For instance, if one’s understanding of concepts is ultimately *psychological*, then the idea that thoughts (thinkings, believings) and facts might have the same conceptual content, would seem to have undesirable consequences. If one thinks that what is in the first instance conceptually contentful is beliefs and thoughts, and that other things, such as visual and auditory sign designs (marks and noises) can count as conceptually contentful only at one remove, by being expressions of beliefs and thoughts, then the claim that the facts those beliefs and thoughts (and derivatively, marks and noises) express (when all goes well) are themselves conceptually contentful threatens to make the existence of those facts (including ones that will never be expressed or represented) objectionably dependent on the existence of

⁴⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Proposition 1 ff.

⁴⁹ One of the grounds on which McDowell has, with some justice, been criticized is his unwillingness to supply such details for the conception of the conceptual in play in *Mind and World*.

thinkings and believings.⁵⁰ The same unfortunate sort of implication results from conjoining the RCC version of the MPC with Davidson's claim that "Only a belief can justify a belief." Berkeley claims that the only things we can intelligibly be understood to represent by our thoughts are other thoughts (the thoughts of God). Some of the British Idealists thought that the reality that appeared to us in thought and belief consisted of the thought of the Absolute—and thought they had learned that lesson from Hegel. More recently, Derrida (using de Saussure's conceptually pre-Kantian and pre-Fregean terminology) offers a picture of a world consisting only of signifiers, with the only things available to be signified being further signifiers. At this point, things have clearly gone badly wrong. If Hegel's opening argument has to be filled-in in a way that has *this* sort of idealism as its consequence, we ought to exploit it by *modus tollens*, not *modus ponens*.

7. In fact, though, Hegel's idea is that the criteria of adequacy for accounts of the relations between appearance and reality that underlie his argument can be satisfied without untoward consequences in the context of quite a different, wholly *nonpsychological* conception of conceptual contentfulness. The kind of idealism that requires a "world-thinker" on the objective side, no less than a finite thinker on the subjective side is indeed a *reduction*. But what it should lead us to reject is not the claim that two-stage representational theories must avoid making strong distinctions of intelligibility between representings and representeds (because they cannot then satisfy the RCC and MPC, and so not the GKC and IEC either) but the conception of conceptual articulation (and hence intelligibility) with which they have been conjoined.

⁵⁰ Here one can and should, however, invoke the distinction between reference-dependence (objectionable) and sense-dependence (not objectionable)—about which more later.

Hegel gets his concept of conceptual content from thinking about Kant's theory of judgment, and taking on board his understanding of concepts as functions of judgment. Kant understands judging in *normative* and *pragmatic* terms. On the normative side, he understands judging as *committing* oneself, taking *responsibility* for something, *endorsing* the judged content. On the pragmatic side, he understands these normative doings in *practical* terms: as a matter of what one is committed or responsible for *doing*. What one is responsible for doing is integrating the endorsed content into a constellation of other commitments that exhibits the distinctive unity of apperception. Doing that ("synthesizing" the unity) is extruding from the dynamically evolving unity commitments that are materially *incompatible* with the new commitment, and extracting and endorsing, so adding, commitments that are its material *consequences*. Judging that *p* is committing oneself to *integrating p* with what one is already committed to, synthesizing a new constellation exhibiting that *rational* unity characteristic of apperception. From Hegel's point of view, that extrusion or expulsion of incompatible commitments and extraction of and expansion according to consequential commitments is the inhalation and exhalation, the breathing rhythm by which a rational subject lives and develops.

Synthesizing a normative subject, which must exhibit the synthetic unity distinctive of apperception, is a *rational* process because if one judgment is materially incompatible with another, it serves as a *reason* against endorsing the other, and if one judgment has another as a material inferential consequence, it serves as a reason for endorsing the other. Understanding the activity of judging in terms of synthesis-by-integration into a rational unity of apperception requires that judgeable *contents* stand to one another in relations of material incompatibility and consequence. For it is such relations that normatively constrain the apperceptive process of

synthesis, determining what counts as a proper or successful fulfilling of the judging subject's integrative task-responsibility or commitment. Concepts, as functions of judgment, determine what counts as a reason for or against their applicability, and what their applicability counts as a reason for or against. Since this is true of *all* concepts, not just formal or logical ones, the incompatibility and inferential consequence relations the concepts determine must in general be understood as *material* (that is having to do with non-logical *content* of the concepts), not just *logical* (having to do with their logical *form*).⁵¹

8. I have introduced the idea of conceptual content as articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence in Kantian terms of the norms such contents impose on the process of judgment as rational integration: their providing standards for the normative assessment of such integration as correct or successful, settling what one has committed oneself to do or made oneself responsible for doing in endorsing a judgeable content. But I also said that Hegel's notion of conceptual content is *not a psychological* one. One could mean by that claim that what articulates conceptual content is *normative* relations, a matter of what one *ought* to do, rather than something that can be read immediately off of what one *actually* does or is disposed to do. That distinction is indeed of the essence for Kant (and for Hegel). But in Hegel's hands this approach to conceptual content shows itself to be nonpsychological in a much more robust sense. For he sees that it characterizes not only the process of thinking on the subjective side of the intentional nexus, but also what is thought about, on the objective side.

⁵¹ I have discussed Kant's normative, pragmatic theory of judging, the way it leads to a notion of conceptual content, and what Hegel made of all of this in the first three chapters of *Reason in Philosophy* [Harvard University Press, 2009].

For objective properties, and so the facts concerning which objects exhibit which properties, *also* stand in relations of material incompatibility and consequence. Natural science, paradigmatically Newton's physics, reveals objective properties and facts as standing to one another in *lawful* relations of exclusion and consequence. That two bodies subject to no other forces collide is materially (non-logically, because of laws of nature) incompatible with their accelerations not changing. That the acceleration of a massive object is changed has as a material consequence (lawfully necessitates) that a force has been applied to it. In the first case, the two ways the world could be do not just *contrast* with one another (differ). It is *impossible*—so Newtonian physics, not logic, tells us, hence *physically* impossible—that both should be facts. And in the second case it is physically necessary—a matter of the laws of physics—that *if* a fact of the first kind were to obtain, so *would* a fact of the second kind.

It follows that if by “conceptual” we mean, with Hegel, “standing in relations of material incompatibility and consequence,” then the objective facts and properties natural science reveals to as physical reality are themselves in conceptual shape. *Modal* realism, the claim that some states of affairs necessitate others and make others impossible, the acknowledgment of laws of nature, entails *conceptual* realism: the claim that the way the world objectively is is conceptually articulated. This is a non-psychological conception of the conceptual in a robust sense, because having conceptual content, standing in relations of material incompatibility and consequence, does not require anyone to *think* or *believe* anything. If Newton's laws are true, then they held before there were thinkers, and would hold even if there never were thinkers. The facts governed by those laws, for instance early collisions of particles, stood in lawful relations of relative impossibility and necessity to other possible facts, and hence on this conception of the

conceptual had conceptual content, quite independently of whether any subjective processes of thinking had gone on, were going on, or ever would go on (in this, or any other possible world).

As I am using the term, a “psychological” theory of the conceptual understands concepts as something like mental particulars, or aspects of mental particulars: as essentially features of psychological or intentional states, paradigmatically thinkings and believings. Hegel’s non-psychological understanding of the conceptual, as a matter of standing in relations of non-logical incompatibility and consequence allows for psychological and intentional states and episodes to count as conceptually contentful, but does not restrict the applicability of conceptual predicates to such states and episodes. It is important to keep this point firmly in mind when considering his conceptual realism. For the result of conjoining conceptual realism about the objective world with a psychological understanding of the conceptual is a kind of Berkeleyan idealism, according to which objective facts require a world-thinker whose thinkings they are. This is emphatically *not* Hegel’s thought (nor is it Frege’s, Wittgenstein’s, or McDowell’s)—although his use of the term ‘Weltgeist’ (which appears three times in the *Phenomenology*) has misled some (including some of his admirers, such as Royce, and even Bradley) on this point. I say something below about how else we might understand his remarks in the *Preface* about the necessity of “construing Substance also as Subject.”

9. Hegel thinks that underlying this point about the conceptual character of objective reality is a deeper one. For he thinks that the idea of determinateness itself is to be understood in terms of standing in relations of incompatibility and consequence to other things that are determinate in the same sense. He endorses Spinoza’s principle “Omnis determinatio est negatio.” For

something to be determinate is for it to be one way *rather than* another. This thought is incorporated in the twentieth-century concept of information (due to Shannon⁵²), which understands it in terms of the partition each bit establishes between how things are (according to the information) and how they are not. Everyone would I agree, I take it, that if a property does not *contrast* with any properties, if it is not even *different* from any of them, then it is *indeterminate*. To know that an object had *such* a property would be to know *nothing* about it. Beginning already in the *Perception* chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel argues that determinateness requires more than mere difference from other things. It requires he calls “exclusive” [ausschließend] difference, and not mere or “indifferent” [gleichgültig] difference. **Square** and **circular** are exclusively different properties, since possession by a plane figure of the one excludes, rules out, or is materially incompatible with possession of the other. **Square** and **green** are merely or indifferently different, in that though they are distinct properties, possession of the one does not preclude possession of the other. An essential part of the determinate content of a property—what makes it the property it is, and not some other one—is the relations of material (non-logical) *modally robust* incompatibility it stands in to other determinate properties (for instance, shapes to other shapes, and colors to other colors). We can make sense of the idea of merely different properties, such as **square** and **green** only in a context in which they come in families of shapes and colors whose members are exclusively different from one another.

An important argument for understanding determinateness Hegel’s way, in terms of exclusive difference or material incompatibility (one pursued in the *Perception* chapter), is that it

⁵² Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver: *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. The University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 1949. ISBN 0-252-72548-4

is required to underwrite an essential aspect of the structural difference between the fundamental ontological categories of *object* and *property* (particular and universal). Aristotle had already pointed out a structural asymmetry between these categories. It makes sense to think of each property as coming with a *converse*, in the sense of a property that is exhibited by all and only the objects that do *not* exhibit the index property. **Has a mass greater than 5 grams** is a property that has a converse in this sense. But it does *not* make sense to think of *objects* as coming with converses, in the analogous sense of an object that exhibits all and only the properties that are *not* exhibited by the index object. This is precisely because some of those properties will be incompatible with one another, and so *cannot* be exhibited by a single object. The number 9 has the properties of being a number, not being prime, being odd, and not being divisible by 5. If it had a converse, that object would have to have the properties of not being a number, being prime, being even, and being divisible by 5. But nothing can have all of *those* properties.

It follows that a world that is *categorially determinate*, in that it includes determinate properties (and relations) and objects (distinguishable by their properties and relations), so facts (about which objects exhibit which properties and stand in which relations) must be determinate in Hegel's sense: the properties must stand to one another in relations of material incompatibility. If they do that, they will also stand to one another in relations of material consequence, since a property **P** will have the property **Q** as a consequence if everything incompatible with **Q** is incompatible with **P**. So **being a bear** has **being a vertebrate** as a consequence, since everything incompatible with **being a vertebrate**, for instance **being a prime number**, is incompatible with **being a bear**.

Since Hegel understands being conceptually contentful as standing to other such items in relations of material incompatibility and consequence, to take the objective world to be minimally determinate, in the sense of consisting of facts about what objects have what properties (and stand in what relations to each other) *is* to take it to be *conceptually* structured. For him, only conceptual realists are entitled to think of objective reality as so much as determinate. (Modal realism comes for free. We didn't need Newtonian physics to get to conceptual realism in this sense; the barest Aristotelian metaphysics is already enough.) This conception of the conceptual is non-psychological in a very strong sense.

IV. Alethic Modal and Deontic Normative Material Incompatibility

10. In this sense, there is no problem seeing both sides of the appearance/reality distinction as conceptually structured.⁵³ So we are not on that account obliged to excavate a gulf of intelligibility between them. For the same reason, the principal obstacle to satisfying the Rational Constraint Condition, and therefore the Mode of Presentation Condition, is removed. (Though I haven't said anything positive about how they might be satisfied, either.) That means in turn that the *semantic* presuppositions that I have been reading Hegel as taking to make it impossible to satisfy the *epistemological* criteria of adequacy expressed by the Genuine Knowledge Condition and the Intelligibility of Error Condition can also be avoided. Access to

⁵³ Already something thought, the **content** is the property of substance; existence [Dasein] has no more to be changed into the form of what is in-itself and implicit [Ansichseins], but only the **implicit**—no longer merely something primitive, nor lying hidden within existence, but already present as a **recollection**—into the form of what is **explicit**, of what is objective to self [Fursichseins]. [M29]

all of these desirable consequences is to be opened up by the non-psychological structural understanding of the conceptual in terms of relations of material incompatibility and (so) consequence.

Hegel's term for what I have been calling "material incompatibility" is "determinate negation" [bestimmte Negation].⁵⁴ His term for what I have been calling "material consequence" is "mediation" [Vermittlung]—after the role of the middle term in classical syllogistic inference.⁵⁵ The first is the more fundamental concept for Hegel—perhaps in part because, as I argued in the previous section, wherever there are relations of incompatibility, there will also be relations of consequence. Hegel often contrasts *determinate* negation, (*material* incompatibility) with "formal" or "abstract" negation (logical inconsistency): **square** is a (not the) determinate negation of **circular**, where **not-circular** is the (not a) formal negation of it. (These are Aristotelian contraries, rather than contradictories.) We are in a position to see that the choice of the term "determinate" to mark this difference is motivated by Hegel's view that it is just relations of determinate negation in virtue of which anything is determinate at all. This is as true of thoughts as it is of things—of discursive commitments on the side of subjective cognitive activity no less than of facts on the side of the objective reality the subject knows of and acts on. That is why, though the conception is at base non-psychological, Hegel's metaconcept of the conceptual does apply to psychological states and processes. Thinkings and believings, too, count as determinately, and *so* conceptually contentful, in virtue of standing to other possible thinkings and believings in relations of material incompatibility and consequence.

⁵⁴ For instance, in [M79] of the *Introduction*.

⁵⁵ For instance, in [M91].

But are subjective commitments conceptually contentful in the *same sense* that objective facts are—even given Hegel’s definition? When we say that **being pure copper** and **being an electrical insulator** are materially incompatible we mean that it is (physically, not logically) *impossible* that one and the same object, at one and the same time, has both properties. But when we say that the *commitments* to a’s being pure copper and a’s being an electrical insulator are materially incompatible, we do *not* mean that it is *impossible* for one and the same subject, at one and the same time, to undertake both commitments. We mean rather that one *ought* not to do so. That ‘ought’ has the practical significance that violating it means that one is subject to adverse normative assessment, that any subject with two commitments that are materially incompatible in this sense is obliged to *do* something, to relinquish (or modify) at least one of them, so as to repair the inappropriate situation. But it is entirely *possible* for a subject to find itself in this inappropriate normative situation. There is a similar disparity on the side of consequences. That **conducting electricity** is objectively a consequence of **being pure copper** then it is *necessary* that any object that has the one property (at a time) has the other (at that time). But if one acknowledges a commitment to some object’s being pure copper, it is still *possible* that one not acknowledge commitment to that object’s conducting electricity. It is just that one *ought* to.

This is to say that the relations of material incompatibility and consequence in virtue of which objective facts and properties are determinate are *alethic modal* relations: a matter of what is conditionally (im)possible and necessary. The relations of material incompatibility and consequence in virtue of which the commitments undertaken and predicates applied by discursive subjects are determinate are *deontic normative* relations: a matter of what one is

conditionally entitled and committed to. We may think of these as alethic and deontic *modalities*, if we like, but they are still very *different* modalities. Hegel is writing downstream from Kant's use of "necessity" [Notwendigkeit] as a genus covering both cases. "Notwendig" for Kant means "according to a rule." He can accordingly see "natural necessity" and "practical necessity" as species of one genus. (They correspond to different uses of the English "must.") Nonetheless, these are very different modalities, substantially different senses of "necessary" (or "must"). The worry accordingly arises that two quite distinct phenomena are being run together, and that the attempted assimilation consists of nothing more than the indiscriminate use of the same verbal label "conceptual."

11. One of the metacommitments for which I claimed Kant's authority is that to be *intelligible* (in a successor-sense to Descartes's) is to be conceptually structured or—what on this broadly structuralist-functionalist account of content amounts to the same thing—conceptually contentful. Once again following Kant, Hegel understands understanding (and so intelligibility) in ultimately *pragmatic* terms: as a matter of what one must be able practically to *do* to count as exercising such understanding. What one must do in order to count thereby as grasping or understanding the conceptual content of a discursive commitment one has undertaken (or is considering undertaking) is be sensitive in practice to the normative obligations it involves. That means acknowledging commitments that are its consequences, and rejecting those that are incompatible with it. This is in one sense, *immediate* intelligibility of commitments, in that it is *commitments* that one acknowledges, and so has in the first instance attitudes towards. In another sense, of course, this sort of intelligibility is not at all immediate, since it is mediated by

the relations to all the other possible commitments, whose relations of material incompatibility and consequence articulate the content acknowledged.

What about the intelligibility of objective states of affairs, which are conceptually contentful in virtue of the alethic modal connections of incompatibility-and-consequence they stand in to other such states of affairs, rather than the deontic normative relations that articulate the conceptual content of discursive commitments (which are “immediately” intelligible in that practical sense I’ve just been talking about)? The key point is that what one needs to *do* in order thereby to count as practically taking or treating two objective states of affairs (or properties) as alethically incompatible is to acknowledge that if one finds oneself with both the corresponding commitments, one is deontically obliged to reject or reform at least one of them. And what one needs to do in order thereby to count as practically taking or treating one objective state of affairs as a necessary (lawful) consequence of another is to acknowledge the corresponding commitment to one as a consequence of the corresponding commitment to the other. Here “corresponding” commitments are those whose deontic normative conceptual relations track the alethic modal conceptual relations of the objective states of affairs. Isomorphism between deontic normative conceptual relations of incompatibility-and-consequence among commitments and alethic modal relations of incompatibility-and-consequence among states of affairs determines how one takes things objectively to be. Practically acquiring and altering one’s commitments in accordance with a certain set of deontic norms of incompatibility-and-consequence is taking the objective alethic modal relations articulating the conceptual content of states of affairs to be the isomorphic ones.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Really, I should say “homomorphic,” since in general subjects need not take it that they are aware of (apperceive, conceptually represent) all the alethic modal relations of incompatibility-and-consequence that objectively obtain.

Because of these relations, normatively acknowledging a commitment with a certain conceptual content *is* taking it that things objectively are thus-and-so—that is, it *is* taking a certain fact to obtain. And that is to say that in immediately grasping the deontic normative conceptual content of a commitment, one is grasping it *as* the appearance *of* a fact whose content is articulated by the corresponding (isomorphic) alethic modal relations of incompatibility-and-consequence. This is how the Mode of Presentation Condition is satisfied in this sort of two-stage representational model while eschewing a strong distinction of intelligibility. The Rational Constraint Condition is satisfied, because if the subject is asked *why*, that is, for what *reason*, one is obliged to give up a commitment to $Q(a)$ upon acknowledging a commitment to $P(a)$ (something we expressible explicitly by the use of deontic normative vocabulary), the canonical form of a responsive answer is: because it is *impossible* for anything to exhibit both properties P and Q (something expressible explicitly by the use of alethic modal vocabulary).⁵⁷ And similarly for consequential relations among commitments.

The Genuine Knowledge Condition is satisfied on this model in the sense that it is not *semantically* precluded by the model that the epistemic commitment to isomorphism of the subjective norms of incompatibility-and-consequence and the objective modal facts which is

But I mean “homomorphic” in the technical mathematical sense of a structure-preserving mapping from one relational structure (whose elements are subjective commitments labeled by declarative sentences, and whose relations are deontic normative relations of incompatibility and consequence) to another (whose elements are objective states of affairs—in virtue of the homomorphism, labellable by the *same* declarative sentences, and whose relations are alethic modal relations of incompatibility and consequence). The structure preserved is those relations. To say that the homomorphism h is “structure-preserving” in this sense means that if aRb in the commitment-structure, where R is normative incompatibility (or consequence) in that structure, then $h(a)R'h(b)$, where R' is alethic incompatibility (or consequence) in the objective conceptual structure.

⁵⁷ I suppress temporal references here. Note that “simultaneously” is not a sufficient qualification. Rather, the predicates-properties themselves should be thought of as including temporal specifications. For having property P at time t can be incompatible with having property Q at time t' : it’s raining now is incompatible with the streets being dry in 2 minutes.

implicit in the semantic relation between them (according to the model's construal of representation) should hold objectively—at least locally and temporarily.⁵⁸ The model also makes sense of the possibility of *error* (it satisfies the Intelligibility of Error Condition). For, following Kant, it construes the representation relation in *normative* terms. In manipulating (acquiring and rejecting) commitments according to a definite set of conceptual norms (deontic relations of incompatibility-and-consequence) one is *committing* oneself to the objective modal facts (alethic relations of incompatibility-and-consequence) being a certain way—as well as to the ground-level empirical determinate facts they articulate being as one takes them to be—the model also says what must be the case for that isomorphism (or homomorphism) relation to fail to hold in fact. Then one has gotten the facts wrong—perhaps including the facts about what concepts articulate the objective world.

12. In this chapter I have aimed to do six things:

- To demarcate explicitly the exact range of epistemological theories, epitomized by those of Descartes and Kant, that fall within the target-area of Hegel's criticism;
- To set out clearly the objection that he is making to theories of that kind, in a way that does not make it obviously miss its mark;
- To formulate Hegel's criteria of adequacy for a theory that would not be subject to that objection he is implicitly putting in play;

⁵⁸ That it *cannot* in principle hold globally and permanently is a deep feature of Hegel's understanding of sensuous and matter-of-factual *immediacy*. This point is discussed in Chapters Five and Seven. The *Vernunft* conception of genuine knowledge is not that of *Verstand*.

- To lay out the non-psychological conception of the conceptual that will form the backbone of Hegel's response (even though it is not officially introduced in the *Introduction* itself, but must wait for the opening chapters of *Consciousness*);
- To sketch the general outlines of an epistemological and semantic approach based on that conception of the conceptual;
- To indicate how such an approach might satisfy the criteria of adequacy for a theory that is not subject to Hegel's objection.

In the next chapter, I look more closely at the account of *representation* that I take Hegel to construct out of elements put in play by this discussion.

Chapter Five

Representation and the Experience of Error: A Functionalist Approach to the Distinction between Appearance and Reality

Part One: Strategy

I. Introduction

1. I began my previous chapter by formulating a central criterion of adequacy for theories of conceptual content that Hegel sees as put in place by the crucial role they play in theories of knowledge. He opens his *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* by insisting that our *semantic* theory must not already doom us to *epistemological* skepticism. Our understanding of discursive contentfulness must at least leave open the possibility that by undertaking conceptually contentful commitments we can (in some cases, when all goes well) come to know how things really are.⁵⁹ He then argues that that condition cannot be met by any account that opens up a

⁵⁹ I use “commitment” for what Hegel will come to talk about as “setzen”: positing.

gulf of intelligibility separating how things subjectively appear to us (how they are “for consciousness”) from how they objectively are (“in themselves”).

Modern epistemological theories since Descartes’s have understood knowledge as the product of two factors: the knower’s grasp of subjective thoughts, and those thoughts’ representational relations to objective things. Knowers’ cognitive relations to those represented things are accordingly mediated by representings of them. On pain of an infinite regress, the relations between the knowers and their representings cannot then in general be understood as themselves mediated and representational. At least some of the representings must be grasped immediately, in the sense of nonrepresentationally.

I do not think that Hegel rejects as in principle broken-backed all epistemological theories exhibiting this two-stage representational structure (though some of his rhetoric invites us to think otherwise). Rejecting theories of this form is *not* an essential element—and certainly not *the* essential element—in the metaconceptual revolution from thinking in terms of categories with the structure of *Verstand* to thinking in terms of categories with the structure of *Vernunft*, which he is recommending. Rather, Hegel begins the *Phenomenology* proper with the claim that the two-stage representational epistemological explanatory strategy leads inexorably to skeptical conclusions *if* it is combined with a particular auxiliary hypothesis concerning the difference between representings and representeds—one that is tempting and in many ways natural.⁶⁰ This is the idea that only representings (appearances, phenomena) are in conceptual shape, while what is represented by them (reality, noumena) is not. On such a view, cognitive processes must transform or map nonconceptual reality into or onto conceptual presentations, since the

⁶⁰ The *Preface*, like most prefaces, was written after the body of the book (“the *Phenomenology* proper”) was completed. Unlike most, I think it is also best read after the rest of the book.

representational relations those processes institute relate nonconceptual representeds to conceptual representings. Getting this picture in view is, I take it, the point of Hegel's metaphors of knowing as an "instrument" or a "medium" in the opening paragraphs of the *Introduction*. The culprit, the semantic assumption that threatens to enforce epistemological skepticism by excavating a gulf of intelligibility between thought and the world thought about, is the idea that only what we think, and not the world we think about, is conceptually articulated.

2. The constructive suggestion Hegel offers as an alternative to this assumption is a radically new, nonpsychological conception of the conceptual. According to this conception, to be conceptually contentful is to stand in relations of material incompatibility ("determinate negation") and material consequence ("mediation") to other such contentful items. I call this a "nonpsychological" conception of the conceptual because it can be detached from consideration of the processes or practices of applying concepts in judgment and intentional action. Objective states of affairs and properties, too, stand to one another in relations of material incompatibility and consequence, and are accordingly intelligible as already in conceptual shape, quite apart from any relations they might stand in to the cognitive and practical activities of knowing and acting subjects. Indeed, if objective states of affairs and properties did not stand to one another in such relations, they would not be intelligible as so much as *determinate*. We could not then make sense of the idea that there is some definite way the world actually is. For that idea essentially involves the contrast with other ways the world might be (other properties objects might have). And the contrasts in virtue of which states of affairs and properties are determinate must involve modally exclusive differences ("It is impossible for a piece of pure copper to

remain solid at temperatures above 1085° C.”) as well as mere differences. (**Red** and **square** are different, but compatible properties.)

This nonpsychological conception of the conceptual is not elaborated in the *Introduction* itself. Rather, it is the principal topic of the succeeding chapters on *Consciousness*. I nonetheless discussed it in the previous chapter, because it is important to understand how Hegel proposes to avoid the danger of excavating a gulf of intelligibility separating subjective conceptual representings from objective nonconceptual representeds. It is the danger of excavating such a gulf in the semantic theory of representation that he sees as potentially fatal to the epistemological enterprise. If the process of knowing must span such a gap, then, Hegel thinks, the possibility of genuine knowledge—knowledge of how things are in themselves, not just how they are “for consciousness”—will be ruled out in principle as unintelligible. Conceptual realism about the objective world, understood in terms of the new, nonpsychological conception of the conceptual, is Hegel’s alternative response.

As I read it, the job of the last two-thirds of the *Introduction* is to sketch a way of thinking about representation, once the two-stage representational semantic model has been shorn of the objectionable collateral commitment to understanding representation as relating conceptual representings to nonconceptual representeds. This means showing how to satisfy two of the key criteria of adequacy identified in the previous chapter. The Mode of Presentation Condition (MPC) requires an account of what it is to be, or even to purport to be, a representing *of* some represented: an appearance *of* something. Satisfying this condition is explaining what representation is. Laying out the structure and rationale of Hegel’s account of representational

purport and success will also shed light on the second *desideratum*. The Rational Constraint Condition (RCC) requires that we explain how what knowing subjects (“consciousness”) is talking or thinking *about* (what is represented) can provide *reasons* for what they say or think about it.⁶¹ Explaining the account of representation Hegel sketches in the *Introduction*, and how it proposes to satisfy these conditions, is the task of this chapter.

II. Two Dimensions of Intentionality and Two Orders of Explanation

3. Our ordinary, presystematic, nontheoretical thought and talk about thinking and talking distinguishes between what we are thinking or saying, on the one hand, and what we are thinking or talking *about*, on the other. We may accordingly say that intentionality, the contentfulness of thought and talk, has two dimensions: what we express when we say or think something, and what we represent in doing so.⁶² We can say both “Kant came to believe *that* Lampl was betraying him,” and “Kant believed *of* his faithful servant that he was betraying Kant.” In the first, the declarative sentence that follows the ‘that’ expresses the content of the belief, and in the second, the noun-phrase within the scope of the ‘of’ says what the belief is about.

What I have called “Hegel’s nonpsychological conception of the conceptual,” which construes conceptual contentfulness as consisting in standing in relations of material incompatibility and

⁶¹ Hegel’s undifferentiated talk of “consciousness” in the *Introduction* carefully does not distinguish between *a* consciousness and consciousness in general. Later on, in the *Self-Consciousness* chapter, we will see that the *social* articulation of consciousness in general into mutually recognizing individual *self*-consciousnesses is essential to understanding either one.

⁶² Saying much more than this immediately raises more systematic and theoretical questions. Can this distinction be paraphrased as that between what we represent and how we represent it? Does the rough and ready distinction of ordinary language involve running together two distinctions that ought to be kept apart: that between Sinn and Bedeutung, and that between the content expressed by declarative sentences and that possessed by singular terms? What further commitments are involved in taking it that in thinking or saying that things are thus-and-so I am representing a state of affairs? My principal purpose here—rationally reconstructing the fundamental considerations, commitments, and ideas that shape the views Hegel expounds in his *Introduction*—is best served by not rushing to engage such theoretically sophisticated semantic issues.

consequence, is a model of what one says or thinks: the first dimension of intentionality or contentfulness ('that'-intentionality). For that reason, I will call this the "conceptual dimension" of intentional contentfulness.⁶³ The question on the table now is how he understands the other, representational dimension ('of'-intentionality).

The empiricists pursued an order of explanation that begins with representational contentfulness and seeks, in effect, to understand and explain conceptual contentfulness more generally in terms of it. One potential advantage of such an approach is that representation shows up as a genus, of which *conceptual* representation is only one species. As I understand him, Hegel pursues a complementary order of explanation. The project he outlines in the *Introduction* is to explain the notion of representation in terms of his nonpsychological concept of conceptual contentfulness. In what follows, I want to explain how I understand his strategy for pursuing this *conceptualist* order of explanation. For one of the principal lessons I think we ought to learn from Hegel concerns his working out of an alternative to the *representationalist* order of explanation of the two dimensions of intentionality, which has dominated the philosophical semantics of the philosophical tradition of the past century that we inherit, as much as it did the (somewhat shorter) philosophical tradition he inherited.⁶⁴

III. Two Kantian Ideas

⁶³ This usage has the potential to mislead, since, as we will see, Hegel takes it that conceptual contentfulness essentially, and not just accidentally, exhibits also a representational dimension.

⁶⁴ Of course, these complementary reductive approaches are not the only strategic possibilities. One might offer independent accounts of conceptual and representational intentionality, and then explain how they relate to one another. Or one might, perhaps most plausibly, insist that the two can only be explained together and in relation to one another.

4. Hegel has a big new idea about how to explain representational content in terms of conceptual content, understood nonpsychologically, as he does, in terms of articulation by relations of material incompatibility and consequence. The way he fills in that conceptualist idea is best understood as a way of combining and jointly developing two Kantian ideas—as discussed in Chapter One. The first is Kant’s *normative* account of judgment. What distinguishes judgments from the responses of merely natural creatures is that we are in a distinctive way *responsible* for our judgments. They express *commitments* of ours. Judging is a kind of *endorsement*, an exercise of the subject’s *authority*. Responsibility, commitment, endorsement, and authority are all *normative* concepts. Kant understands concepts as “functions of judgment” in the sense that the concepts applied in a judgment determine *what* the subject has made itself responsible for, committed itself to, endorsed, or invested with its authority. In judging, subjects normatively bind themselves by rules (concepts) that determine the nature and extent of their commitments.

By pursuing an account with this shape, Kant makes urgent the question of how to understand the normative bindingness (his “*Verbindlichkeit*”) of the concepts applied in judging. Where the early Modern tradition, beginning with Descartes, had worried about our (“immediate”, i.e. non-representational) grip on concepts, for Kant the problem becomes understanding their normative grip on us. What is it to be committed to or responsible for the claim that *p*? The second Kantian idea on which Hegel’s conceptualist approach to the representational dimension of intentionality is based is that the responsibility in question should be understood as a kind of *task* responsibility: it is the responsibility to *do* something. What one is responsible for doing in committing oneself to *p* is *integrating* that new commitment into the constellation of prior

commitments, so as to sustain its exhibition of the kind of unity distinctive of apperception. (Apperception is cognitive or sapient awareness, awareness that can amount to knowledge. Apperceiving is judging. Judgment is the form of apperception because judgments are the smallest unit for which one can take cognitive responsibility.) This integration is a species of the genus Kant calls ‘synthesis’ (which is why the structural unity in question is a *synthetic* unity of apperception).

This integrative task-responsibility has three dimensions: critical, ampliative, and justificatory. These are species of *rational* obligations, for they are articulated by which commitments serve as *reasons* for or against which others.

- One’s *critical* integrative-synthetic task responsibility is to reject commitments that are materially *incompatible* with other commitments one has acknowledged.
- One’s *ampliative* integrative-synthetic task responsibility is to acknowledge commitments that are material consequences of other commitments one has acknowledged.
- One’s *justificatory* integrative-synthetic task responsibility is to be able to provide reasons for the commitments one has acknowledged, by citing other commitments one acknowledges of which they are material consequences.

These are ought-to-do’s that correspond to the ought-to-be’s that one’s cognitive commitments, judgments, or beliefs ought to be consistent, complete, and justified. They are norms of rationality. When explicitly acknowledged, they are the norms of *systematicity*. Since judging consists in implicitly committing oneself to fulfill the critical, ampliative, and justificatory integrative-synthetic task responsibilities, in judging at all one implicitly undertakes these

rational, systematic commitments. Collectively, they define the rational, normative, synthetic unity of apperception.

III. Hegel's Functionalist Idea

5. Hegel sees that this account of the *activity* of judging has immediate consequences for the understanding of the *contents* judged: for what one has taken responsibility for, committed oneself to, in judging that *p*. The *rational* articulation of the normative synthetic-integrative task-responsibility Kant identifies as the kind of endorsement distinctive of judging means that we can understand judgeable contents in terms of what we are *doing* in judging. For those contents must determine the rational relations such judgeable contents stand in to one another: what is a reason for and against what. The critical integrative-synthetic task-responsibility requires that judgeable contents stand to one another in relations of material *incompatibility*. The ampliative and justificatory integrative-synthetic task responsibilities require that judgeable contents stand to one another in relations of material *consequence*. And that is to say that judgeable contents must have *conceptual* content, in just the sense Hegel himself endorses. That concept of the conceptual is already implicit in Kant's account of judging.

Hegel extracts his conception of conceptual contentfulness from what is required to synthesize a constellation of commitments exhibiting the rational, normative unity distinctive of apperception. This is a broadly *functionalist* idea. For it is the idea of understanding judgeable contents in

terms of the role judgments play in the integrative process that is Kantian apperceiving. This functionalist explanatory strategy is of the first importance in understanding not only Hegel's conception of the expressive dimension of intentionality ('that'-intentionality), but also the way he builds on that to offer an account of the representational dimension ('of'-intentionality).

What is functionally reconstructed in terms of role in the synthesis of apperception is, of course, at most a part of Kant's understanding of the conceptual. For this abstract, top-down approach to concepts does not essentially depend on their contrast and collaboration with intuitions. Kant himself would insist that for this reason, understanding concepts solely in terms of relations of material incompatibility and consequence apart from any relation to intuitions must be a purely formal one. So conceived, concepts would be empty in the sense of being devoid of representational content. From the point of view of Hegel's conceptualist explanatory strategy, this conception of the expressive or conceptual dimension of intentionality provides the raw materials in terms of which the representational dimension is to be understood.

6. Hegel sees that Kant envisages a normative approach not only to the expressive-conceptual dimension of intentionality ('that'-intentionality), but also to the representational dimension ('of'-intentionality). The conceptual content of a judgment is what one makes oneself responsible *for* in judging, and its representational content (what is represented by it) is what one makes oneself responsible *to*. For Hegel's Kant, we have seen, being responsible for a judgment to the effect that *p* consists in being responsible for integrating it into the constellation of one's prior commitments, so as to sustain the rational normative unity characteristic of apperception. What the judgment is *about*, what is represented by it, is what exercises a distinctive kind of *authority* over assessments of its correctness—as, we might want to say, a representing of that

represented. Something (paradigmatically, a judging) is intelligible as being a representing just insofar as it is responsible for its correctness to something that thereby counts as represented by it.

In Kant's terms, the objective form of judgment is the "object=X" which every judgment as such is responsible to (for its correctness). (The subjective form of judgment, the "I think" which can accompany every judging, marks the knower who is responsible for the judgment—that is, responsible for integrating it with the others for which that knower takes the same kind of responsibility.) In the form in which this thought appears in Hegel's *Introduction*, represented objects are what serves as a normative *standard* [Maßstab] for assessments of commitments that count as representing those objects just in virtue of that constellation of authority and responsibility. Hegel's idea is to apply the functionalist explanatory strategy, which looked to normative role in the synthetic-integrative activity of judging for understanding the conceptual dimension of judgeable contents, also to the understanding of the representational dimension of content. That is, he will look to what knowing subjects need to *do* in order thereby to count as acknowledging the authority of something to serve as a standard for assessing the correctness of a judgment, in order to understand representational relations. If he can exhibit that kind of doing as an aspect of the synthetic-integrative activity in terms of which the conceptual dimension of content is explained, he will have carried out the conceptualist explanatory strategy of understanding the representational dimension of intentionality in terms of the expressive-conceptual dimension ('of'-intentionality in terms of 'that'-intentionality).

I take it that the main task of the last two-thirds of the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* is to sketch this way of working-out the conceptualist explanatory strategy for understanding the relations between the two dimensions of intentionality. The logical flow as I see it is this.

1. The starting-point is Kant's *normative* conception of judgment, which sees judging as endorsing, committing oneself to, taking responsibility for some judgeable content.
2. This idea is made more definite by the Kantian account of judging as integrating a new commitment into a constellation of prior commitments, so as to maintain the rational normative unity distinctive of apperception.
3. That idea in turn is filled in by understanding the synthetic-integrative activity as having the tripartite substructure of satisfying critical, ampliative, and justificatory task-responsibilities.
4. To this idea is conjoined the *functionalist* strategy of understanding judgeable contents as articulated by the relations they must stand in in order to play their role in that activity, as what one is endorsing, committing oneself to, or taking responsibility for.
5. In light of the tripartite substructure of synthesizing a constellation of commitments exhibiting the rational unity distinctive of apperception (intentionality), this thought yields a conception of judgeable contents as articulated by rational relations of material incompatibility (appealed to by the critical task-responsibility) and material consequence (appealed to by the ampliative and justificatory task-responsibilities). The result is Hegel's conception of conceptual contentfulness in terms of determinate negation and mediation (which he will develop and motivate in more detail in the *Consciousness* section of the *Phenomenology*).

The strategy for implementing the conceptualist order of explanation is to treat this account of the expressive-conceptual dimension of intentionality both as providing the raw materials and the model for an account of the representational dimension of intentionality and conceptual content.

6. Alongside Kant's normative conception of judgment, a normative conception of representation is discerned. A judgment counts as representing some represented object insofar as it is responsible to that object for its correctness, insofar as that object exercises authority over or serves as a standard for assessments of its correctness.
7. The strategy is then to apply the functionalist idea again, to understand representational content in terms of what is required to serve as a normative standard for assessments of the correctness of judgments, as an aspect of the synthetic process of integrating those commitments into constellations of antecedent commitments exhibiting the rational unity distinctive of apperception.

Part Two: Implementation

IV. The Mode of Presentation Condition

7. The task of making sense of the representational dimension of intentionality according to the conceptualist strategy is explaining what it is for some judgeable conceptual content, articulated by its relations of material incompatibility and consequence to other such contents, to

function as representing some worldly state of affairs. Saying what role in the synthetic-integrative process of judging a judgeable content must play in order to count as purporting to represent something is then satisfying what in the previous chapter I called the “mode of presentation” condition (MPC). For it is saying what it is to be or purport to be a mode of presentation of something else: a representing of that represented. Hegel’s preferred way of talking about what I have called “representings” is “what things are *for* consciousness.” What things are for consciousness purports to be the appearance of a reality: what things are *in* themselves. Satisfying the MPC is saying what it is for something to show up as an appearance *of* something. We can also talk about the representing/represented, appearance/reality, what things are *for* consciousness/what things are *in* themselves distinction in terms of the Kantian phenomena/noumena distinction.

The question Hegel is asking is: What is it for something to be something *for* consciousness? This is asking the deepest and most important question about the representational dimension of intentionality. Hegel is not at all presupposing the notion of things being something *for* consciousness. It is not one of his primitives. Rather, he offers a functionalist account of representational purport and representational content that is modeled on, embedded in, and a development of the functionalist account of propositional content in terms of the activity of judging that he sees as implicit in Kant’s way of proceeding. There Hegel answers the question that would later be put as that of specifying the distinctive “unity of the proposition” holistically, in terms of standing to other such judgeable contents in relations of material incompatibility and material consequence. Those relations show up as *rational* relations because they articulate what judgments serve as reasons for and against what others. That “unity of the

proposition” is understood functionally, in terms of the synthetic unity of a constellation of commitments that is characteristic of apperception: the dynamic unity that is created and sustained by integrating new commitments with old ones subject to the triadic systematic critical, ampliative, and justificatory task-responsibilities. That the unity of propositional *content* can be so understood in terms of the unity that defines the rational norms that must govern what one *does* in order for such doings to count as judgments having contents exhibiting the unity characteristic of the propositional is what it means to say that, in the end “there is only one unity”: ultimately, the synthetic unity of apperception.⁶⁵

We have seen that the first piece of the puzzle is the idea that for something to be something *for* consciousness is to be understood in normative terms of the distinctive kind of *authority* it exercises over assessments of the *correctness* of the judgments consciousness consists in. Judgments must be *responsible to* what is represented, for their correctness, for them to be intelligible as representing it, being about it, being an appearance of it. As Hegel puts the point, what is represented must serve as a normative *standard* for judgments. The next question is how this thought can be operationalized in a functionalist spirit—that is, understood in terms of what one must *do* to count as acknowledging that authority, the responsibility of what things are *for* consciousness, which is to say judgments, to what things are *in* themselves. Consciousness itself must take its judgments to be representations *of* some reality—that is, to point beyond themselves to something that they answer to for their correctness. Otherwise it would not be taking it that in judging a consciousness is taking a stand on how things are in themselves. Its judgments would not be how things really are *for* consciousness.

⁶⁵ "The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of representations in an intuition." [A79, B104].

What we must understand, then, is the sense in which, as Hegel says, which “consciousness provides itself with its own standard,” how “in what consciousness within its own self designates as the *in-itself* or the true, we have the standard by which consciousness itself proposes to measure its knowledge.”⁶⁶ How is it that: “the difference between the in-itself and the for-itself is already present in the very fact that consciousness knows an object at all. Something is *to it* the in-itself, but the knowledge or the being of the object for consciousness is *to it* still another moment.”⁶⁷ The distinction between what things are *in* themselves and what they are *for* consciousness must itself be something *to* consciousness. This passage marks an absolutely crucial (if seldom acknowledged) distinction: between things being something *for* consciousness and things being something *to* consciousness. It is easy to miss this distinction, because unlike the phrases “*for* consciousness” (“für Bewußtsein”) “*in* themselves” (“an sich”), “*to* consciousness” is expressed without an explicit preposition, in the dative (and anaphoric) construction “ihm.”⁶⁸

8. What Hegel tells us is something *to* consciousness is just the distinction between what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves. I take it that what something is *for* consciousness is the content of a judgment: something that is *explicit*. Judgeable contents are explicit in the sense of being thinkable and statable in declarative sentences (or ‘that’-clauses). They are *propositional* contents. As we have seen, Hegel understands such contents in terms of the relations of material incompatibility and (hence) material consequence they stand in to one another. And he understands those relations in turn in terms of the role judgeable contents play

⁶⁶ M§84.

⁶⁷ M§85.

⁶⁸ For instance “daß ihm etwas das *An-sich*...ist,” in M§85.

in the rational synthetic process of integration and rectification of commitments so as to maintain the unity characteristic of apperception. By contrast, what things are *to* consciousness is a functional matter of how they are *implicitly* taken or practically treated by consciousness. In what it *does*, consciousness practically distinguishes between what things are *for* it and what they are *in* themselves: between appearance and reality. Consciousness, he says, *is* their comparison.⁶⁹ We must understand how what consciousness *does* that is essential to its being intelligible *as* consciousness can be understood as practically acknowledging this distinction. This will be understanding how "consciousness is, on the one hand, consciousness of the object, and on the other, consciousness of itself; consciousness of what to it is the True, and consciousness of its knowledge of the truth."⁷⁰ What consciousness as such *does* is judge: engage in the synthetic-integrative activity that creates and maintains the synthetic unity of apperception. So the distinction between appearance and reality, what things are for consciousness and what they are in themselves, representings and representeds, must be intelligible in terms of functional roles with respect to that activity. What Hegel calls "natural consciousness" itself does not need to have these metaconceptual concepts, does not need to be able to apply them explicitly in judgments.⁷¹ But we who are thinking about its activity must be able to attribute to it a grasp of what these concepts make explicit, a grasp that is implicit in what consciousness does.

The normative construal of representation teaches us that the role something must play in practice in order to be functioning as a reality that is represented by or appearing in a judgment is

⁶⁹ M§85.

⁷⁰ M§85.

⁷¹ In M§77-78.

that of a normative *standard* for the assessment of its correctness.⁷² What in the previous chapter I called the “rational constraint condition” tells us that what serves as a *standard of assessment* of judgeable contents must be able to serve as a *reason* for the assessment. This is to say that it must, at least in principle, be available *to* consciousness *as* a reason. To be serviceable as a reason, what plays the role of a standard of assessment must be in conceptual shape; it must stand to representings and representables in relations of material incompatibility and consequence. That is what is required for it to be able to serve as a reason for or against judgments, a standard with respect to which they can be assessed as correct or incorrect.

V. The Experience of Error

9. With that thought, we arrive at the crux of Hegel’s functionalist account of representational purport. Hegel’s term for the process by which new commitments are integrated into a constellation of old ones is ‘experience’ (Erfahrung). The aspect of that process on which his account of the representational purport of judgeable contents turns is the critical one, in which incompatibilities that result from adding a new judgment are acknowledged and resolved. The systematic normative obligation along this dimension is a task responsibility: the responsibility to do something. What one is obliged to do is to restore the synthetic unity characteristic of apperception by repairing the incoherence that results when a subject finds itself with incompatible commitments. This process is the experience of *error*.

Consider an example. A naïve subject looks at a stick half-submerged in the water of a pond and perceptually acquires a belief that the stick is bent. Upon pulling it out, she acquires

⁷² The assessment in question is Hegel’s ‘Prüfung’, in M§85.

the belief that it is straight. Throughout she has believed that it is rigid, and that removing it from the water won't change its shape. These judgments are jointly incompatible.

Acknowledging that is acknowledging that a mistake has been made. Those acknowledgements are acknowledgements of the practical responsibility to restore compatibility to one's commitments (the critical task-responsibility). What one must do is reject or modify at least one of the commitments in the offending constellation. Suppose our subject gives up the belief that the stick is bent, keeping the belief that it is straight (as well as the other collateral commitments). Our subject might have made the choice she did concerning what to retain and what to reject in the light of her belief that she is much more experienced and reliable at visually judging shapes looked at through air or water than through both.

Notice first that in treating the two shape-commitments as materially incompatible (in the context of the collateral commitments to rigidity and shape-constancy), the subject is implicitly treating them as having a common subject: as being *about* one and the same object. For commitments to stick A being bent and to stick B being straight are *not* incompatible. It is only if it is the *same* stick to which one is attributing those incompatible properties that the resulting judgeable contents are incompatible with one another. (Hegel discusses this issue at some length in the *Perception* chapter of the *Phenomenology*.) Taking two commitments to be incompatible (by acknowledging in practice the obligation to revise at least one of them) is treating them as being about one object, and to be attributing incompatible properties to *it*. In other words, it is treating them as representings of a common represented. Practically acknowledging the incompatibility of two commitments involves a kind of representational *triangulation*. It is implicitly treating them as sharing a topic, as being about the same thing. To say that this

acknowledgment of common representational purport is *implicit* is to say that the representational purport is acknowledged in what the subject *does*, rather than explicitly, as the propositional content of a judgment—a judgment to the effect that these different senses (conceptual contents, articulated by their relations of material incompatibility and consequence) pick out the same referent. That is, it is a matter of what these commitments are *to* consciousness, not what they are *for* consciousness. (The stick is both bent and straight *for* consciousness, but the incompatibility of those commitments is in this simplest case only something *to* consciousness.)

10. This is a point about the first stage of the process that is the experience of error: *acknowledgment* of the material incompatibility of some commitments the subject has made. At this stage, the incompatible commitments are all on a level. No invidious assessments of their relative authority (credibility) have yet been made. What I have said so far is that even at this stage, we can understand an acknowledgment of the joint representational purport of two commitments as being implicit in the practical acknowledgment of their material incompatibility.⁷³ This purely formal dimension of practical representational purport is complemented by another, richer dimension that emerges only at the next stage of the experience of error. For acknowledgment of incompatibility (that is, of the presence of some error or other among the commitments being taken to be mutually incompatible) is to be followed by revising at least some of those commitments. The second, *rectification*, stage of the experience of error consists in doing what at the first stage one acknowledged one's practical obligation to do: repair the acknowledged incompatibility by revising or rejecting some of the offending commitments.

⁷³ The point generalizes to constellations of more than two jointly incompatible commitments (so long as all the members of the set are essential to their collective incompatibility, in the sense that dropping them would leave a mutually compatible remainder). For simplicity, I will stick to the two commitment case.

In our example, in relinquishing the bent-stick belief and retaining the straight-stick belief, the subject is treating the first as presenting a mere *appearance*, and the second as presenting the corresponding *reality*. For at this stage in the experience of error, the mistake has been localized and identified. The problem, the subject takes it, is the bent-stick commitment. It is in error. Rejecting it is practically taking it not to express how things really are. For endorsing a judgeable content is what one must do in order thereby to be taking or treating it in practice as expressing how things really are. The subject had previously practically accorded that status to the bent-stick judgment. Repudiating that prior commitment is taking it no longer to deserve that status. The subject takes it to have been revealed (by its collision with other commitments) as merely *purporting* to express how things really are, that is, as being a mere *appearance*.

Furthermore, the triangulation point ensures that the rejected bent-stick judgment is practically construed not just as an appearance, but as an appearance *of* the reality presented by the retained commitment: What appeared as bent (the stick) has been revealed as really straight. In the experience of error, both the straight-stick and the bent-stick commitments are practically taken or treated as *modes of presentation* of a reality (the stick), one veridical and one misrepresenting it. Both of these stages of the process that is the experience of error, the acknowledgment of incompatibility and its rectification, contribute to the satisfaction of the mode of presentation condition on a construal of intentional content. For the way judgments function, the roles they play, in these phases of the experience of error show what it is one must *do* in order thereby to count as acknowledging in practice the representational dimension of conceptual content: what it

is to take or treat judgments as representings or appearances of how some represented thing really is.

In the first phase of the experience of error, the authority of the straight-stick belief collides with that of the bent-stick belief. In the second phase, the authority of the straight-stick belief is endorsed, while that of the bent-stick belief is rejected. In the context of collateral beliefs concerning rigidity, what can change the shape of rigid objects, and the relative reliability of visual perception under various conditions, the straight-stick belief is accepted as a *standard* for the assessment of the *correctness* (veridicality) of the bent-stick belief. Since they are incompatible, the latter is rejected as incorrect according to that standard. The bent-stick belief is assessed as responsible to the constellation of commitments that includes the straight-stick belief. All of this is to say that as presented in the straight-stick judgment, the straight stick is performing the *normative* functional office characteristic of the reality represented by some representing: it is an authoritative standard for assessments of the correctness of representings that count as about it just in virtue of being responsible to it for such assessments. So when we look at the role played by various commitments in the experience of error, we see that the mode of presentation condition is satisfied in the sense required by the normative construal of representing.

Furthermore, the rational constraint condition is also satisfied by understanding representational purport functionally in terms of the role conceptually articulated judgeable contents play in processes that have the structure of the experience of error. For, in the context of the constellation of collateral commitments in our example, the straight-stick belief provides a

reason for rejecting the bent-stick belief. The collision between the two is *rationally* resolved. Belief in the differential reliability of visual perception under the conditions that led to the endorsement of the bent-stick and straight-stick perceptual judgments conjoined with the straight-stick belief constitute an argument against the bent-stick belief. In undergoing the experience of error, our subject in practice treats reality (the straight stick) as providing *rational* constraint on the assessment of various appearances as veridical.

In proceeding this way, the subject in practice takes or treats the bent-stick belief as expressing just what things are for consciousness, and the straight-stick belief as expressing what things are in themselves. These statuses, in turn, are what the beliefs are *to* consciousness, or implicitly. For the subject of the experience of error need not explicitly deploy concepts of reality and appearance, represented and representing, what things are in themselves and what things are for consciousness, noumena and phenomena, in order for what it does in retaining one of the (contextually) materially incompatible dyad of commitments and rejecting the other to be intelligible as practically taking or treating one as presenting how things really are and the other as presenting a mere appearance. One is *to* consciousness what the stick is in itself (straight), and the other is *to* consciousness what the stick is (was) merely *for* consciousness.⁷⁴ This is what Hegel means when he says that “consciousness provides itself with its own standard,” how “in what consciousness within its own self designates as the *in-itself* or the true, we have the standard by which consciousness itself proposes to measure its knowledge.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ As Hegel puts it in M§84 and M§85, quoted above.

⁷⁵ M§84.

VI. The Two Sides of Conceptual Content are Representationally Related

11. On Hegel's model the conceptual content shared by representing and represented, appearance and reality, phenomenon and noumenon, commitment and fact is abstracted from the two different forms that relations of material incompatibility and consequence can take: the subjective form made explicit by deontic normative vocabulary and the objective form made explicit by alethic modal vocabulary. Conceptual content is essentially, and not just accidentally, what can take these two forms. The central metaphysical concept that incorporates and expresses this point is determinate negation. It articulates the sense in which anything (thoughts, facts, properties, conceptual contents) can be *determinate*: by strongly contrasting with, precluding, excluding, other determinates (Spinoza: "Omnis determinatio est negatio."). On the objective side, that means that how things are is essentially also a matter of the structure of its alethic modal relations to what it makes impossible and what it makes necessary. On the subjective side, it means that commitments can be understood as determinate only in the context of the functional role they play in the *process* of acquiring and revising commitments. For it is that process that is governed by the deontic normative relations of incompatibility and consequence that articulate the conceptual content of those commitments. One of the things that has always been hard to understand about Hegel's conception of (determinate) negation, and (so) his conception of concepts and their contents, is his connection of these traditional logical notions with *dynamic* categories, of movement, process, and restlessness.⁷⁶ What lies behind it

⁷⁶ In the *Phenomenology*, this is a theme emphasized in the *Preface*, in partial explanation of why "everything hangs on apprehending and expressing the truth not merely as *substance* but also equally as *subject*." [M17] Subjects are the ones who must respond to the normative demands implicit in applying a concept whose content is articulated by the relations of determinate negation (material incompatibility) and mediation (inferential consequence) it stands in to other such contents. That they must respond by *doing* something, *changing* their further commitments (rejecting some and accepting others) is the context in which we must understand his talk of the

is this connection between incompatibility in the normative sense and the process of commitment acquisition and revision.

Hegel regards the subjective articulation of the conceptual content of commitments by deontic normative relations of material incompatibility-and-consequence and the objective articulation of the conceptual content of commitments by alethic modal relations of material incompatibility-and-consequence as two sides of one coin, two aspects of one conception. His substantive claim is that his concepts of determinate negation and conceptual content do not equivocate. Rather, they have a fine structure that is articulated by the relations between the two intimately related forms, subjective and objective, that conceptual contents defined by determinate negation (and mediation) can take. This claim plays a central role in his strategy of understanding the subjective and objective sides of the intentional nexus of knowledge (and later, agency) by abstracting them as complementary aspects of conceptual content—a strategy he contrasts, already in the *Introduction*, with traditional approaches that seek to take antecedently and independently specified conceptions of subject and object and somehow bolt them together to get an intelligible picture of their intentional relations. That approach, he claims, is doomed so long as a psychological conception of the conceptual (and hence of the intelligible) restricts conceptual content to the subjective side of what then inevitably appears as a gulf of intelligibility separating knowing and acting subjects from the objective world they know about and act on and in.

“movement of the Begriff” [M34]. This is what he is talking about when he refers to “...the self-moving concept which takes its determinations back into itself. Within this movement, the motionless subject itself breaks down; it enters into the distinctions and the content and constitutes the determinateness, which is to say, the distinguished content as well as the content’s movement, instead of continuing simply to confront that movement. [M60] It is why: “Determinate thoughts have the ‘I’, the power of the negative, or pure actuality, for the substance and element of their existence...” [M33]

12. How are we to understand the conception of conceptual content (articulated by relations of determinate negation and mediation) as *amphibious* between its two forms: subjective-normative and objective-modal? I think it should be understood in terms of two claims. First, deontic normative vocabulary is a *pragmatic metavocabulary* for alethic modal vocabulary. Second, as a consequence, there is a kind of *sense-dependence* relation between these vocabularies. On the first point, deontic normative vocabulary lets one *say* what one must *do* in order thereby to be *saying* what alethic modal vocabulary let's one say.⁷⁷ For what one must do in order to count as grasping the contents expressed by alethic modal vocabulary—by the claims that it is *impossible* that both *p* and *q*, that if *p* then *necessarily r* (which Hegel claims have the expressive function of making explicit the relations in virtue of which *p*, *q*, and *r* have the conceptual contents they do)—is in practice take or treat *commitments* to *p* and *q* as *normatively incompatible* (so one cannot be *entitled* to both) and commitment to *p* as *normatively entailing* commitment to *r* (so if one is committed to the first, one counts as thereby committed to the second). It is only by knowing how to accord with the norms expressed in the deontic vocabulary that one can count as able to understand and apply modal vocabulary. Treating one's commitments as standing in these normative relations to one another *is* understanding them as commitments concerning what is objectively impossible and necessary—that is, as appearances *of* a reality articulated by such alethic modal relations. As we have seen, engaging in the experience of error, governed by practical norms that respect deontic relations of incompatibility, is what taking or treating one's commitments as appearances (representings) of some (represented) reality consists in.

⁷⁷ I offer some background, clarification, and examples of the concept of pragmatic metavocabulary in Chapter One of *Between Saying and Doing* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

That deontic normative vocabulary in this way plays the expressive role of being a pragmatic metavocabulary for alethic modal vocabulary means that one cannot understand alethic modal vocabulary, cannot deploy it with understanding, unless one has mastered the normatively governed practices made explicit by deontic vocabulary. This is a claim about practically *grasping* what is expressed by alethic modal vocabulary—about what one must be able to *do* in order to *say* what it says. It is *not* a claim about what must be *true* for what one *says* using that modal vocabulary to be true. That is, the claim is *not* that unless some claims formulable in deontic normative vocabulary were true, no claims formulable in alethic modal vocabulary could be true. It is not, and does not entail, the claim that unless some concept-users could apply normative vocabulary, no modal claims would be true. The claim is that unless one *practically* understands what is said by normative vocabulary—can do the things, engage in the practices, that are specifiable in normative vocabulary—one cannot understand what is said by modal vocabulary. That is, the claim is that there is a kind of sense-dependence of modal vocabulary on what is expressed by normative vocabulary, not a kind of reference-dependence.

That distinction can be made clear by an example that has nothing to do with normativity or modality. Regardless of whether or not this would be a good way to think about the concept of beauty, we can define a *response-dependent* concept beauty* by stipulating that some object or situation counts as beautiful* just in case it *would*, under suitable circumstances, produce a response of pleasure in a suitable subject suitably exposed to it. (The use I want to make of the example won't depend on how these various parametric notions of suitability get filled-in.) Then the property of being **beautiful*** is sense-dependent on that of **pleasure**: one could not *understand* the (amphibiously corresponding) *concept* beautiful* unless one *understood* the

concept pleasure. For the one is defined in terms of the other. It does not at all follow that something could not *be* beautiful* unless something responded with pleasure. On this definition, there were sunsets that were beautiful* before there were any suitable, pleasure-capable responders, and they would still have been beautiful* even if there never had been such responders. For it still could be the case that *if there were* such responders present, they *would* respond (or *would have* responded) with pleasure. In just the same way, if we define a planet or star as “supraterranean” just in case it has a mass more than twice that of the Earth, we are not thereby committing ourselves to denying that a planet could have that property in a possible world in which the Earth did not exist. Depending on how they are specified, properties can be *sense-dependent* on other properties (as **beautiful*** is on **pleasure** and **supraterranean** is on **has at least twice the mass of the Earth**), without being *reference-dependent* on them. That is, something can exhibit a property P that is sense-dependent, but not reference-dependent, on a property P' in a world in which nothing exhibits the property P'.

The claimed dependence of modal properties (via their amphibiously corresponding concepts) on norm-governed activities of accepting and rejecting commitments is of the sense-dependence, rather than the reference-dependence kind. The objective world would still be conceptually structured in the sense of consisting of facts about objects and their properties and relations, articulated by alethic modal relations of relative compossibility and necessitation, even in worlds that never included knowing and acting subjects who applied normatively articulated concepts in undertaking and rejecting commitments. The mind-dependence of the objective world asserted by this dimension of Hegel's idealism—call it “objective idealism”—is not the objectionable Berkeleyan reference-dependence kind, but of the much more plausible (or at least colorable)

sense-dependence kind. *We* can understand and describe possible worlds without subjects to whom deontic normative vocabulary applies as nonetheless making applicable alethic modal vocabulary. But our capacity to make sense of such possibilities depends on our being able to engage in practices made explicit by the application of deontic normative vocabulary.

The sort of model that Hegel constructs to contrast with two-stage representational models committed to a strong difference of intelligibility between representings and representeds depends on an account of conceptual contentfulness committed to the amphibiousness of conceptual content between a subjective form articulated by deontic normative relations of incompatibility-and-consequence and an objective form articulated by alethic modal relations of incompatibility-and-consequence. The relation of correspondence between them is that of a pragmatic metavocabulary inducing a kind of practical sense-dependence. According to this approach, modal realism entails conceptual realism, which entails objective idealism. In his *Introduction*, Hegel is introducing us not just to his book, but also to the metaconceptual categorical framework he elsewhere calls “*Vernunft*,” by contrast to the traditional modern metaconceptual categorical framework that reached its most explicit and revealing form in Kant, which he calls “*Verstand*.” Thinking in the *Vernunft* way involves saying things that are strange indeed from the standpoint of the traditional framework of *Verstand*. These are such claims as that since there is some determinate way the world objectively is, it, no less than thought about it, comes in conceptual (hence intelligible) form, and would do even if there never had been concept-applying subjects. Accordingly, thought and being, representing and represented (subject and substance, in the idiom of the *Preface*) are essentially paired forms that conceptual content can take. The concept of negation (incompatibility) in terms of which we should

understand determinateness (whether of subjective thought or of objective fact) essentially involves a principle of *motion*, of *change*, of active, practical *doing*—as odd as this seems from the point of view of the logical tradition indigenous to *Verstand*. Subjective practices and processes specifiable in deontic normative vocabulary and objective relations and facts specifiable in alethic modal vocabulary are two complementary aspects or dimensions of whatever is determinate, and hence intelligible. (We are now in a position to see these as claims about practical sense-dependence relations, consequent upon the pragmatic metavocabulary relation between normative and modal vocabularies.) Hegel's aim in the opening paragraphs of the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* is to convince us that if the epistemological possibility of genuine knowledge and so much as the intelligibility of error are not be semantically ruled out of court at the outset, we must broaden the range of models of the possible relations between appearance and reality so as to encompass not only the familiar *Verstand* semantic paradigm, but also the new, unfamiliar *Vernunft* one—in spite of the initially strange and unpalatable consequences it embraces.

VII. Conclusion

13. I ended Chapter Four with a discussion of the two forms conceptual content can be seen to take, once we adopt Hegel's non-psychological conception of it (as articulated by relations of material incompatibility and consequence): subjective and objective. It is this conception that is to make it possible for us to avoid excavating a gulf of intelligibility between knower and known, appearance and reality, in our semantics, which then must lead to skepticism in our epistemology. We are now in a position to understand the relation between propositional

commitments (judgments, beliefs) articulated by normative deontic relations of incompatibility, on the subjective side of certainty, what things are for consciousness, and facts and possible states of affairs, articulated by alethic modal relations of incompatibility, on the objective side of truth, what things are in themselves, as itself a *representational* one: a matter of representings and representeds. We can see how our commitments are intelligible as *appearances* of an objective reality. That intelligibility is *functionalist*, and *pragmatist*. Now we know what we must *do* in order thereby implicitly to be practically taking or treating our commitments as *appearances of a reality*—so that the distinction between what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves is something *to* consciousness.

The account rehearsed here of representational purport in terms of the experience of error operationalizes what in the previous chapter I called the “Intelligibility of Error” and the “Genuine Knowledge” criteria of *epistemological* adequacy on *semantic* accounts of intentional contentfulness and aboutness. This whole chapter has been an extended discussion of how in the same terms the Mode of Presentation Condition can be satisfied: how to understand the representational dimension of intentionality in terms of the expressive conceptual dimension. I have concluded this chapter by talking about how that first dimension, and so the second, can be understood in terms of what one is *doing* in undergoing the experience of error. That is, I have been talking about how the knowing subject’s activity, which is discussed in deontic normative terms of commitment and entitlement (and the subjective aspect of the notion of material incompatibility they articulate), can be understood as involving *representational* purport: as an *appearance* (what things are *for* consciousness) of the *reality* (what things are *in* themselves)

constituted by the objective states of affairs discussed in alethic modal terms of necessity and possibility (and the objective aspect of the notion of material incompatibility they articulate).

What in Chapter Four I called the “Rational Constraint” condition is the requirement that what is represented be intelligible as providing *reasons* for assessments of the *correctness* of representings. It has shown up here as a consequence of the normative construal of representation that Hegel sees as already introduced by Kant. In the context of the account offered here of representational purport in terms of functional role in cognitive processes characterized by the experience of error, we can see how the reciprocal sense-dependence of the subjective and objective dimensions of the (meta-)concept of material incompatibility (determinate negation), consequent upon deontic normative vocabulary serving as a pragmatic metavocabulary for alethic modal vocabulary, articulates a deep connection between satisfaction of the Mode of Presentation Condition and the Rational Constraint Condition.

In the next chapter, I pursue further Hegel’s conception of how our grasp of the concept of truth depends on the practical experience of error, and offer detailed readings of some of the most puzzling passages at the end of the *Introduction*.

Chapter Six

Following the Path of Despair to a Bacchanalian Revel:

The Emergence of the Second, True, Object

I. Introduction

1. Hegel opens the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* by considering an epistemological picture according to which our cognitive faculties are regarded as “the instrument with which one takes hold of the absolute or as the medium through which one discovers it.”⁷⁸ Philosophers otherwise as diverse as Descartes, Locke, and Kant can be seen to work with versions of such a picture. It seems clear that Hegel thinks we need to break out of the confines of this “natural” way of thinking about knowledge. In Chapter Four, I tried to say why, and to indicate in general terms the shape of the new picture he will recommend to succeed this traditional one.

The broadest form of his objection is that theories of the kind he is complaining about make us patsies for skepticism. More specifically, he thinks traditional modern epistemology is conducted within the scope of semantic assumptions that make it impossible in the end to satisfy what I called the “Genuine Knowledge Condition.” This is the requirement that an epistemological theory not make it unintelligible that, at least when all goes well, how things

⁷⁸ [M73]

appear to us is how they *really* are—in his terms, that how things are *for consciousness* can be how they are *in themselves*. I argued that the crucial feature of the class of theories he takes to fail this requirement (by precluding the intelligibility of genuine knowledge) is not that they construe the relation between appearance and reality (“certainty” and “truth”, “knowledge” and “the absolute”) in representational terms. It is that they take the termini of the relation to be characterized by a structural difference: representing appearances are construed as *conceptually articulated*, while represented realities are not. Theories with this shape excavate a gulf of intelligibility separating knowing from the known, mind from world.⁷⁹

Of all the differences there might be between how the known world objectively is and how the knowing subject represents it, why should one think *this* possible difference make such a difference? Why would it matter if thought, but not the world thought about, is construed as coming in conceptual shape? Hegel is working in a Kantian idiom, in which there is an internal connection between conceptual articulation and *understanding*. Concepts are the form of apperceptive awareness. So what can be understood, what is intelligible, is what is in conceptual shape. Hegel thinks that unless the picture has it that we can understand how things really are, any relation we assert between these realities and the appearances we *can* understand or grasp must itself be unintelligible. No relation to what is ultimately and intrinsically *unintelligible*, because not conceptually articulated, could count as a *cognitive* relation. It could not be the basis for an account of knowing that makes sense of the possibility of genuine knowledge. This is the problem with the idea of “getting the truth in its purity simply by subtracting from the result the

⁷⁹ This is how I understood his claim that such theories presuppose “the notion that there is a *difference between ourselves and this knowledge*” in the sense that “the absolute *stands on one side* and that *knowledge.. is on the other side*, for itself and separated from the absolute...Hence it assumes that knowledge...is outside the absolute and therewith outside the truth as well.” [M74]. In the context of such an assumption, it is a contradiction to treat knowledge as nonetheless genuinely possible.

instrument's part in that representation of the absolute which we have gained through it."⁸⁰ The result of "subtracting" its conceptual form from our understanding would be something unintelligible. We cannot understand the relation between what is intelligible and what is not intelligible, for the simple reason that we cannot understand what is not intelligible. A picture of this sort cannot satisfy the Genuine Knowledge Condition.

2. In Chapter Four, I suggested that the key to the alternative picture Hegel wants to put in place lies in the non-psychological conception of the conceptual he introduces and develops in the *Consciousness* section of the *Phenomenology*. According to this conception, conceptual contents are articulated by relations of material incompatibility: his "determinate negation" or "exclusive difference" (Aristotelian contrariety). (It will follow that conceptual contents also stand to one another in relations of material consequence: his "mediation.")

This line of thought begins with an understanding of *determinateness* that applies equally to thoughts and things. It is codified in Spinoza's dictum "Omnis determinatio est negatio." Both that there is some determinate way the world is and that a thought has a determinate content are to be understood in terms of what possibilities they *exclude*. A state of affairs whose obtaining would rule out the obtaining of no other, a thought whose truth would rule out the truth of no other, would be *indeterminate* ("unbestimmt"). The kind of negation in terms of which determination is understood in Hegel's version of Spinoza's thought is that characterizing relations of what he calls "exclusive" ("ausschließend") difference, as opposed to "indifferent" ("gleichgültig") difference. That is, it is the relation between **circular** and **triangular**, not that between **circular** and **red**. (In the *Perception* chapter, Hegel uses a thought of Aristotle's to

⁸⁰ [73].

show how the notion of exclusive difference can be used to make sense of states of affairs as having the internal structure of objects-with-properties.)

This way of understanding the metaphysics of determinateness is by no means idiosyncratic to Hegel. Besides its Spinozist (and, indeed, Scholastic) antecedents, it is the master idea behind contemporary information theory, which understands the information conveyed by a signal in terms of the possibilities its receipt excludes for its recipient. And it can be understood as another way of expressing the understanding of a proposition as a partition of possible worlds into those compatible and those incompatible with its truth. But what warrant is there for thinking of this metaphysical conception of determinateness in terms of material incompatibility as a conception of the *conceptual*?

Justifying that identification requires giving an account of two defining characteristics of the conceptual. First, one must show how to justify in its terms the Kantian identification of *intelligibility* in terms of conceptual form, by saying what it is to *grasp* or *understand* something that is in conceptual form in this sense of “conceptual form.” Second, one must show how what is conceptually contentful in this sense also exhibits *representational* purport. These correspond to the two dimensions of intentionality I distinguished last time: ‘that’-intentionality and ‘of’-intentionality, what one can think or say, and what one would thereby be thinking or talking *about*.

Chapter Five addressed exactly these two issues. Starting with the notion of conceptual contents as articulated by the relations of material incompatibility they stand in to other such

contents, it showed both what one must *do* in order thereby to count as *cognitively grasping* such contents, and how doing that amounts to practically acknowledging the *representational purport* of those contents. Grasping or understanding a conceptual content is engaging in the process of *experience*. This is Hegel's successor-conception of Kantian apperception. For Kant, what one must do in order to apperceive (to be cognitively aware) is judge. Judging, in turn, is understood as rationally integrating a commitment into a developing whole exhibiting the distinctive synthetic unity characteristic of apperception. That unity is a rational unity, with critical, ampliative, and justificatory dimensions, corresponding to the normative obligation to extrude materially incompatible commitments, acknowledge material consequences, and assess justificatory credentials. The contents commitments must possess in order to be subject to these rational normative obligations must, accordingly, stand in relations of material incompatibility and consequence to other such contents. Grasping or understanding such a content is practically being able to distinguish what is materially incompatible with it (what it conceptually excludes), what is a material consequence of it (what it conceptually includes), and what it is a material consequence of (what conceptually includes it). That is just to say that it is necessary and sufficient to be graspable in this sense—to be apperceivable—that the contents be determinate, in the sense of standing to one another in relations of determinate negation and (so) mediation. What is determinate in this sense is in conceptual form.

In the *Introduction*, Hegel focuses on one dimension of the process of apperceptive experience: the experience of *error*. This sort of experience is occasioned by finding oneself with materially incompatible commitments. Practically acknowledging the error is exercising one's critical task-responsibility to repair it, removing the incompatibility by relinquishing or

modifying at least one of the jointly incompatible commitments. In the previous chapter I explained how it is in the experience of error that *representational* purport is practically taken up—that is, that determinate (hence conceptually contentful) commitments are taken or treated *as* representations, as appearances *of* some reality. Incompatible commitments must have a common topic. For if two (or more) properties are incompatible, what is impossible is that they should be exhibited by one and the same object (at the same time). If one attributes incompatible properties to two different objects, one has not yet made a mistake. To take it that one *has* made a mistake, that the commitments *are* incompatible, *is* to take them to refer to or represent one and the same object.

In the second phase of the experience of error, a subject responds to the acknowledgment of error by fulfilling the critical task-responsibility of repairing the incoherence, by amending or discarding one of the commitments. Doing that is treating the amended or discarded commitment *as* a mere appearance, and the retained and resulting commitments as expressing how things really are. In this way, through the experience of error, the distinction between what things are *in themselves* (reality) and what things are merely *for consciousness* (appearance) becomes something *to* consciousness itself. That distinction is practically implicit in the process that is the experience of error. This is how consciousness incorporates as a basic aspect of the structure of its functioning a practical appreciation of its determinate subjective commitments as purporting to represent how things really, objectively are. It treats its commitments as *about* things in the sense of answering to how things are in themselves for the correctness of how things are for it.

3. So Hegel's Spinozist concept of determinateness, in terms of articulation by relations of modally robust exclusion, material incompatibility, or determinate negation, meets the principal requirements for a meta-concept of conceptual contentfulness. It makes sense of what it is to *grasp* a conceptual content, and of what it is for such contents to have a *representational* dimension. Furthermore, the ways these two criteria of adequacy are satisfied are deeply connected. In the context of Hegel's structural critique of traditional modern epistemology, the key explanatory virtue of this non-psychological conception of the conceptual is that it applies not only to subjective thoughts, but also to objective facts. For both are determinate—there are determinate ways consciousness takes things to be and there are determinate ways things are—in virtue of standing in relations of material incompatibility to other ways one could take things to be or things could be. But the subjective and objective senses of “material incompatibility” are not the same. If two states of affairs are materially incompatible, then it is *impossible* for both to obtain. (If two objective properties are materially incompatible, then it is impossible for one and the same object simultaneously to exhibit both.) But if two thoughts or judgments are materially incompatible, it does not follow that it is impossible for one subject to be simultaneously committed to both. It only follows that the subject *ought not* to be, that such a subject is *obliged* to *do* something to *change* the situation: to fulfill the standing critical task-responsibility to rectify the situation by eliminating the incoherence. On the side of objects, incompatibility of properties is an alethic modal matter of impossibility; on the side of subjects, incompatibility of commitments is a deontic normative matter of impropriety.

But the notion of material incompatibility or determinate negation that comes in these two flavors is not simply ambiguous. For what one must *do*, in order thereby to count as

practically *taking* or *treating* two objective properties or states of affairs *as* objectively incompatible is precisely treat the corresponding commitments as normatively incompatible—in the sense that finding oneself with both obliges one to *change* one’s commitment, in acknowledgment of an *error*. Treating two commitments as incompatible in the deontic normative sense *is* representing two properties or states of affairs as incompatible in the alethic modal sense. What one must do in order to manifest practically one’s grasp or *understanding* of conceptual contents is suitably engage with them in the practice or process of experience, especially the experience of error, by fulfilling one’s obligation to resolve acknowledged incompatibilities. Doing that is treating incompatible commitments as *representing* incompatible states of affairs.

The relation between the sense of “materially incompatible” that is articulated by deontic normative relations of what one is obliged or entitled to do, on the subjective side of representings (what things are for consciousness), and the sense that is articulated by alethic modal relations of what is necessary and possible, on the objective side of representeds (what things are in themselves) is one of reciprocal sense-dependence. It is not that there cannot be objective properties and states of affairs standing in relations of modal incompatibility to one another unless there are representings of them. It is that one cannot *understand* what one is saying or thinking in saying or thinking that they stand in such relations, except as part of a story that includes what subjects who *represent* them as so standing, by practically acknowledging their normative obligation to do something to repair the situation when they find themselves with commitments to objects having incompatible properties, or to incompatible states of affairs more generally. And one cannot understand the nature of the obligation to alter one’s conceptual

commitments when they turn out to be incompatible unless one understands them *as* representing objectively incompatible situations. This relation of reciprocal sense-dependence is responsible for the Janus-faced character of Hegel's metaconcept of determinate negation. On the one hand, it characterizes the alethic modal *relations* that (as Kant taught) structure the objective world. On the other hand, it characterizes the norm-governed subjective *process* or practice that is experience—which is always, *inter alia*, the experience of error. In this latter aspect, it is not a matter of static relations, but a dynamic principle of movement, change, and development.⁸¹

That one cannot understand the most fundamental structure of the objective world apart from understanding what one must *do* to represent things as being so is an essential element of Hegel's idealism. One can put the point by saying that objective substances, no less than subjects, things no less than thoughts, as determinate, are essentially *conceptually* structured.⁸² But unless one keeps in mind the complex fine-structure of Hegel's Janus-faced non-psychological conception of the conceptual in terms of determinateness as articulated by material incompatibility, one will not understand what is meant by such a claim.

II. The Emergence of the Second, New, True Object

⁸¹ The pure movement of this alienation, considered in connection with the content, constitutes the necessity of the content. The distinct content, as determinate, is in relation, is not 'in itself'; it is its own restless process of superseding itself, or negativity...[M805]

⁸² Without endorsing the Hegelian conception of the conceptual in terms of determinate negation, in particular without invoking the fine-structure that relates its objective alethic modal and subjective deontic normative aspects, John McDowell makes a point of this general shape when he says in *Mind and World* [Harvard University Press, 1994] that on the understanding he is recommending (and associates with both Kant and Hegel) “the conceptual has no outer boundary.”

4. The greatest hermeneutic challenge in reading the *Introduction* lies in the three paragraphs that precede the final one ([85], [86], and [87], in Miller's numbering). For here Hegel makes two claims that are surprising enough to be worth quoting at length. The first is introduced with the observation, which we have put ourselves in a position to understand, that in the experience of error the subject ("consciousness"):

...is consciousness of what to it is the true, and consciousness of its knowledge of this truth. Since both are *for consciousness*, consciousness itself is their comparison; whether its knowledge of the object corresponds or fails to correspond with this object will be a matter *for consciousness itself*. [85]

The subject assesses the material compatibility of its commitments, exercising its critical rational task-responsibility as a judge. Where an incompatibility is found, a choice must be made. One commitment can still be endorsed as presenting how things really are, in themselves. But then others must be unmasked as mere appearances. They are now implicitly or practically treated ("to it") as only presenting how things are for consciousness. (Recall here the crucial distinction, which Hegel marks grammatically, as was pointed out in Chapter Five, between what things are *implicitly*, "to" consciousness ["ihm"] and what they are *explicitly*, "for" consciousness.) In the example from the previous chapter, seeing its behavior when the half-immersed stick is fully removed from the water, I discard my commitment to its being bent, and substitute a commitment to its being straight.

It is only slightly hyperbolic to say that the consciousness that is the subject of this experience "is their comparison."

Something is *to it the in-itself*, but the knowledge or the being of the object for consciousness is *to it* still another moment. It is upon this differentiation, which exists and is present at hand, that the examination [Prüfung] is grounded. And if, in this comparison, the two moments do not correspond, then it seems that consciousness will have to alter its knowledge in order to bring it into accord with the object. [85]

That is, after the discordance has been repaired and material compatibility restored, the appearance, what things are *for* consciousness, should, as far as consciousness is concerned (“*to consciousness*”), have been brought in line with the reality, what things are in-themselves.

But that is not how Hegel wants us to understand what happens in such experience:

In the alteration of the knowledge, however, the object itself becomes to consciousness something which has in fact been altered as well. For the knowledge which existed was essentially a knowledge of the object: with change in the knowledge, the object also becomes an other, since it was an essential part of this knowledge. Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what had been to it the *in-itself* is not in itself, or, what was *in itself* was so only *for consciousness*.

When therefore consciousness finds its knowledge not corresponding with its object, the object itself will also give way. In other words, the standard [Maßstab] of the examination is changed if that whose standard it was supposed to be fails to endure the course of the examination. Thus the examination is not only an examination of knowledge, but also of the standard used in the examination itself.

[85]

This is very odd. Why should we think that when a commitment a subject took to express how things really are (that is what it was *to* it) is revealed as expressing merely how things are for consciousness, that the *reality* changes? When I realize that the stick I took to be bent is really straight, my view of the stick changes, but the stick itself does not. That I took it to be bent is *not*, in our ordinary way of thinking, an essential feature of *the stick*. Surely the contrary claim does not follow from what one might justifiably claim: that its object, the stick, was an essential feature of the appearance, the stick-as-bent. The stick serves as a standard for assessments of the correctness of my commitments as to its shape. In what sense does that standard change when I realize that my shape-commitment does not measure up to the standard, that it gets things wrong? Hegel's claim here seems extravagant and perverse. The argument he offers:

For the knowledge which existed was essentially [wesentlich] a knowledge of the object: with change in the knowledge, the object also becomes an other, since it was an essential part of this knowledge.

appears to trade on an obviously unwarranted slide. Even if we grant that what it is a claim *about* (what it represents) is essential to the identity of the claim—so that altering the represented object would alter the content of the claim—it just does not follow that the content of the claim is correspondingly essential to the identity of the represented object—so that altering the content of the claim alters the object. “Being essential to” is not in general a symmetric relation. So for instance, we might think that the identity of my parents is essential to my identity. Anyone with different people as parents would be someone different from me; it is not possible for me to have had different people as parents. But when we look at the converse, it does seem possible that my parents might never have had any children, or only had some of the children they did, not including me. Essentiality of origin of humans does not entail essentiality of offspring. It is easy

to see Hegel here as engaging in a sleight-of-hand, attempting to smuggle in unobserved an implausible idealism that makes what is thought about it essential to the identity of what is thought about. But that would be to misunderstand the claim he is making.

The second surprising claim is introduced as part of an account of the basic structure of *experience*, in the distinctive technical sense Hegel introduces here:

This *dialectical* movement, which consciousness exercises on its self—on its knowledge as well as its object—is, *in so far as the new, true object emerges to consciousness* as the result of it, precisely that which is called *experience*. [86]

The challenge posed by the earlier passage is echoed here. How are we to understand the “movement” which consciousness “exercises” on the *object* of its knowledge? The key question will turn out to be this: when commitment to the stick as bent is discarded and replaced by commitment to the stick as straight, what exactly is the “new, true object”? Answering this question correctly is integral to understanding the sense in which, on Hegel’s account, the representational purport of conceptually contentful commitments is itself something *to* consciousness, implicit in its own process of experience. In order to understand the justification for saying that the experience of error changes not only how the subject is committed to things being (the stick is taken to be straight, not bent), “consciousness’s knowledge”, but also the *object* of that knowledge, the essential point to realize is that the “new, true object” which “emerges to consciousness” is *not* the straight stick. (After all, *it* didn’t change; it was straight all along.)

5. Hegel describes the experience like this:

Consciousness knows *something*, and this object is the essence or the *in-itself*. But this object is also the in-itself for consciousness; and hence the ambiguity of this truth comes into play. We see that consciousness now has two objects; one is the first *in-itself* and the second is the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*. The latter seems at first to be merely the reflection of consciousness into its self, a representation, not of an object, but only of its knowledge of the first object. But, as already indicated, the first object comes to be altered for consciousness in this very process; it ceases to be the in-itself and becomes to consciousness an object which is the *in-itself only for it*. And therefore it follows that this, the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*, is the true, which is to say that this true is the *essence* or consciousness' new *object*. This new object contains the annihilation of the first; it is the experience constituted through that first object. [86]

The first thing to notice is that the first object is described as the "*first in-itself*". That implies that there is (at least) *another in-itself*. But there is only one real stick (and it is straight). What is at issue here is the role something can play in experience. The role in question is **being an in-itself to consciousness**. To be an in-itself to consciousness is to be what consciousness practically takes or treats *as* real. At the beginning of the experience, the subject in question endorses the claim that the stick is bent. That is what the subject takes to be real. That bent-stick commitment expresses the *first in-itself to consciousness*: how it initially takes things really, objectively, to be. The *second in-itself to consciousness* is expressed by the later straight-stick endorsement.

What, then, is the second object being talked about in this passage? It is not the straight stick (which is the second in-itself to consciousness). Hegel says here the second object is the “being-for-consciousness” of the first in-itself. What does that mean? When he introduces the movement of experience in the previous paragraph, Hegel says

Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what had been to it the *in-itself* is not in itself, or, what was *in itself* was so only *for consciousness*. [85]

What the subject discovers is that what it had taken to express the way things really are (the stick is bent), actually only expresses an appearance. The role the bent-stick representation plays for consciousness, what it is to consciousness, has changed. It “becomes to consciousness an object which is the in-itself only for it.” The “new, true object” is the bent-stick representation revealed *as* erroneous, as a *misrepresentation* of what is now *to* the subject the way things really are: a straight stick. This representing is “true” not in the sense of representing how things really are, but in the sense that what is now to consciousness is what *it* really is: a mere appearance, a misrepresenting. That is why “This new object contains the annihilation of the first; it is the experience constituted through that first object.”

This is the sense in which “In the alteration of the knowledge...the object itself becomes to consciousness something which has in fact been altered as well.” What alters is the status of the bent-stick representing, what it is to consciousness. It had enjoyed the status of being to consciousness what the stick is in itself. But now its status has changed to being *to* consciousness only what the stick was *for* consciousness: an appearance. Understanding that the two “objects” are the bent-stick representation when it was endorsed and the bent-stick

representation when it is no longer endorsed, we are now in a position to see that on our first reading we misunderstood “knowledge of the object” in the argument

For the knowledge which existed was essentially a knowledge of the object: with change in the knowledge, the object also becomes an other, since it was an essential part of this knowledge.

What is knowledge *to* consciousness is what is endorsed, what the subject practically or implicitly takes to be how things really are. What has, to consciousness, the status of knowledge changes in the course of the experience, from being the stick as bent to being the stick as straight. That was knowledge *of* the object not in the sense in which a representing is *of* something represented, but in the sense that the status (being to consciousness knowledge) was possessed or exhibited by the object (the bent-stick representation). That the status was possessed by *that* object (that conceptual content) is indeed essential to *that* knowing [“denn das vorhandene Wissen war wesentlich ein Wissen von dem Gegenstande”]. When the status attaches to something else, a straight-stick representation, it is in a straightforward sense a *different* knowing. What object (conceptual content) it attaches to is *essential* to its being that knowing. Altering the knowing, by endorsing a different, incompatible content, alters the status of the original content, and so alters the “object” associated with the original knowing: its status changes from being a conceptual content that is endorsed to being one that is rejected.

So read, the first originally surprising claim becomes so no longer. The second surprising claim is one that Hegel himself flags as such:

In this presentation of the course of experience, there is a moment in virtue of which it does not seem to be in agreement with the ordinary use of the term

“experience.” This moment is the transition from the first object and the knowledge of that object to the other object. Although it is said that the experience is made in *this other object*, here the transition has been presented in such a way that the knowledge of the first object, or the being-for-consciousness of the first in-itself, is seen to become the second object itself. By contrast, it usually seems that we somehow discover another object in a manner quite accidental and extraneous, and that we experience *in it* the untruth of our first Concept. What would fall to us, on this ordinary view of experience, is therefore simply the pure *apprehension of* what exists in and for itself. From the viewpoint of the present investigation, however, the new object shows itself as having come into being through an *inversion of consciousness* itself. [87]

Here Hegel is explicitly acknowledging that there is a danger of being misled by the way he has described the experience of error. He explicitly confirms the reading we have been considering: the second (“new, true”) object is the “being-for-consciousness of the first in-itself.” The “inversion of consciousness” is the change in status of the “stick is bent propositional conceptual content from being endorsed (as reality) to being rejected (as mere appearance). His surprising claim is that *this* element of experience—the unmasking of what one had taken to present reality as it is in itself as in fact a mere appearance, a representation that is a misrepresentation—is the centrally important one, *not* the new perception that leads one to endorse the claim that the stick is straight. That new “object”—that is, conceptual content we are led to endorse—indeed prompts the experience of error. But if we focus on the event that contingently *occasions* the process that is the experience, he is saying, we will miss what is necessary and essential to that process.

This new way of thinking about experience that he is recommending is really the major point of the whole *Introduction*. It is what makes possible the sort of narrative that occupies the rest of the *Phenomenology*. Focusing on the distinctive “inversion of consciousness” by which what was to the subject the way things are in themselves is unmasked as merely how things were for consciousness is what will give us, Hegel’s readers, a phenomenological insight that is not part of the experience of error of the phenomenal consciousness we are considering. The passage above continues:

This way of observing the subject matter is our contribution; it does not exist for the consciousness which we observe. But when viewed in this way the sequence of experiences constituted by consciousness is raised to the level of a scientific progression. [87]

This shift of perspective is what makes possible the “science of the experience of consciousness” [87]—the working title with which Hegel began the project of writing what would become the *Phenomenology*. The particular commitments acknowledgement of whose material incompatibility initiates a process of experience are contingent. What is necessary about that process is the acknowledgement of error, and the subsequent disillusionment it leads to. What is necessary is “the *movement* which is cognition—the transforming of that in-itself into that which is for itself...”, as Hegel says at the very end of the book.⁸³ At this point in our story, we understand what that movement *is*, but not yet why it is the key to the *science* of the experience of consciousness. That will be the topic of the final section of this chapter.

⁸³ [802], in the final chapter, *Absolute Knowing*.

III. From Skepticism to Truth through Determinate Negation

6. Hegel tells us that the key to understanding the significance of the change in perspective he is urging is to think through the significance for the threat of skepticism of the role of what is made explicit in experience by the concept of determinate negation. The penultimate paragraph of the *Introduction* continues:

As a matter of fact, the circumstance which guides this way of observing is the same as the one previously discussed with regard to the relationship between the present inquiry and skepticism: In every case the result which emerges from an untrue mode of knowledge must not be allowed to dissolve into an empty nothingness but must of necessity be grasped as the nothingness *of that whose result it is*, a result which contains what is true in the previous knowledge. Within the present context, this circumstance manifests itself as follows: When that which at first appeared as the object sinks to the level of being to consciousness a knowledge of the object, and when the *in-itself becomes a being-for-consciousness of the in-itself*, then this *is* the new object. [87]

We have put ourselves in a position to understand this final sentence, about how the change of normative status a judgeable content undergoes when the subject withdraws a previous endorsement (the “inversion of consciousness”) is intelligible as the emergence of a new object. What does this have to do with the attitude we should take toward skepticism?

The issue arises because of the expository trajectory we have traversed. In Chapter Four, I claimed that we should read the opening of the *Introduction* as concerned that epistemological skepticism not be forced on us already by our semantics. The more specific diagnosis was that skepticism will be forced on us if we construe the relation between appearance and reality as one in which conceptually contentful representings confront nonconceptually structured representeds across what then looms as a gulf of intelligibility. I claimed further that Hegel's proposed therapy (gestured at in the *Introduction*, and developed in the *Consciousness* chapters) is to identify *conceptual contentfulness* with *determinateness*, and to understand determinateness in terms of *negation*. This is appealing to the Spinozist principle "Omnis determinatio est negatio." The kind of negation in question, *determinate* negation, corresponds to Aristotelian contraries, not Aristotelian contradictories, which would be understood in terms of formal or abstract negation. The determinateness of a thought or state of affairs (predicate or property) is a matter of its modally robust *exclusion* of other thoughts or states of affairs, those it is materially incompatible with.

This conception allows Hegel to endorse another central Spinozist doctrine: "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas." For this notion of determinateness applies equally to things and thoughts, representeds and representings. No gulf of intelligibility is excavated between appearance and reality. Determinate thoughts and determinate states of affairs are, as determinate, both conceptually contentful, and hence in principle intelligible. Epistemological skepticism is not built into this semantics at the outset.

In this context, there is no reason not to construe the semantic relation between appearance and reality in representational terms. But understanding conceptual content in terms of the concept of determinate negation does not just *allow* a such a representational construal. In Hegel's hands it makes possible a constructive *analysis* of the representational dimension it finds to be implicit in conceptual content.⁸⁴ Hegel combines this fundamental aspect of Spinoza's thought (the structural isomorphism of the order and connection of things and ideas, construed in terms of relations of determining negation) with a Kantian idea that Spinoza did *not* have. For Spinoza did not appreciate the distinctive *normative* character of the "order and connection of ideas," which distinguishes it from the order and connection of things. Hegel's synthesis of Spinoza with Kant depends on Kant's grounding of semantics in pragmatics: his account of what one must *do* in order to take responsibility for a judgeable conceptual content.

In Chapter Five, I rehearsed how Hegel's account of the experience of error—what he makes of Kant's critical integrative task-responsibility in synthesizing a constellation of commitments that has the rational unity distinctive of apperception—underwrites an implicit, practical grasp of representational purport. Downstream from Kant, Hegel's conception of determinate negation accordingly incorporates an essentially *dynamic* element. It arises out of the crucial residual *asymmetry* between the order and connection of ideas and that of things. It is *impossible* for one object simultaneously to exhibit materially incompatible properties (or for two incompatible states of affairs to obtain), while it is only *inappropriate* for one subject

⁸⁴ I take one of the positive points of Hegel's Introduction to the *Phenomenology* to be a suggestion as to what it is to treat such conceptual contents as appearances *of* a reality, to take such Sinne to be modes of presentation of Bedeutungen, to understand thinkables that can be expressed *de dicto* (e.g. as the thought *that* the object in the corner is round) as always also in principle expressible *de re* (e.g. as the thought *of* the ball that *it* is round). To do that one must acknowledge them as subject to a certain kind of normative assessment: answerability for their correctness *to* the facts, objects, and properties that they thereby count as *about*.

simultaneously to endorse materially incompatible commitments. Representings are articulated by deontic normative relations, while representeds are articulated by alethic modal ones. Finding oneself with materially incompatible commitments obliges one to *do* something, to revise those commitments so as to remove the incoherence. It is only in terms of that obligation to repair that we can understand what it is to take or treat two objective properties or states of affairs as incompatible in the alethic modal sense. Understanding the representational dimension of conceptual content—the relation and connection between the deontic and alethic limbs of the cognitive-practical constellation of subjective and objective—requires understanding how the experience of error, articulated in normative terms, is intelligible as the (re)presentation of objective alethic modal relations of incompatibility. Unlike Spinoza’s, Hegel’s concept of determinate negation is Janus-faced, displaying subjective and objective aspects that are complementary in the sense of being reciprocally sense-dependent.⁸⁵ On the side of the subject, the normative significance of negation is pragmatic: it yields an obligation to movement, change, development. Determinate negation, material incompatibility mediates the relation between pragmatics and semantics—as well as the relation between the expressive and the representational dimensions of intentionality, on the semantic side.

But the revelation that the semantogenic core of experience is the experience of *error*, that its essence consists in the unmasking of something as not real, but as mere appearance, seems to raise once more the specter of skepticism. If error is the necessary form of experience, if what one implicitly discovers in experience is always the incorrectness and inadequacy of

⁸⁵ This is how “the form of the Notion...unites the objective form of Truth and of the knowing Self in an immediate unity” [805].

one's knowledge or understanding, then why is not skepticism the right conclusion to draw? Why has not Hegel's own concept of experience shown itself as the "path of despair"?

7. Hegel wants to understand the relation between the two "objects", the "first in-itself" and the "being- for-consciousness of the in-itself" as one of *negation*. "This new object contains the nothingness [Nichtigkeit] of the first, it is what experience has made of it" [86]. The idea is that skepticism consists in taking the sense in which the second object is negation of the first to be *formal* or abstract negation, rather than *determinate* negation. Doing that is "allowing the result which emerges from an untrue mode of knowledge" to "dissolve into an empty nothingness." The point is that the sense in which the second object "contains the nothingness of the first" is not that "The stick is bent," is succeeded by "The stick is *not* bent." It is that it is succeeded by the realization that "The stick is bent," is not saying how things really are. It is an appearance, a *mis-representation of a straight stick*. That is the materially incompatible commitment for which the bent-stick representation was discarded, changing its normative status. The original commitment is not revealed by its incorrectness as an appearance—but as the appearance of a *reality*. It is genuinely an appearance of that reality: a way that reality shows up for consciousness. It is wrong, but it is not simply wrong. It is a path to the truth.

When Hegel says that "the result which emerges from an untrue mode of knowledge" must "be grasped as the nothingness of that whose result it is, a result which contains what is true in the previous knowledge," this is so in a double sense. First, the original take on things is not simply cancelled, leaving a void, as a bare contradiction of it would do. It is replaced by a contrary, substantive commitment—one that is materially, not merely formally incompatible

with it. Something positive has been learned: the stick is straight. Second, the transition from the original object to the second, true object is a change of status from a propositional attitude ascribable to the subject *de dicto* to one ascribable (also) *de re*. Where before we, and the subject, could say “S believes *that* the stick is bent,” after the experience of error and the rejection of the original endorsement in favor of a materially contrary one, the very same attitude is ascribable as “S believes *of* a straight stick that *it* is bent.” That is the point of the analysis of representational purport and its uptake in terms of the experience of error, which I discussed last time. The transformation of status is a rejection of a prior endorsement, but it is not *just* a rejection of it. In an important sense, it is an enrichment of its content, as it becomes *to* the subject a claim *about* something. The representational dimension of its conceptual content becomes manifest—albeit by its being revealed as a *misrepresentation*.

As we saw in Chapter Four, the unintelligibility of this representational dimension is characteristic of the semantically rooted epistemological skepticism Hegel diagnoses in the opening paragraphs of the *Introduction*. It is no surprise at this point, then, to learn that skepticism’s characteristic defect is a failure to appreciate the role of determinate negation in extracting consequences from the experience of error.

the presentation of untrue consciousness in its untruth is not a merely *negative* movement, as natural consciousness one-sidedly views it. And a mode of knowledge which makes this onesidedness its basic principle is... the skepticism which sees in every result only pure *nothingness* and abstracts from the fact that this nothingness is determinate, that it is the nothingness *of that from which it results*. In fact, it is only when nothingness is taken as the nothingness of what it

comes from that it is the true result; for then nothingness itself is a determinate nothingness and has a *content*. The skepticism which ends up with the abstraction of nothingness, or with emptiness, cannot proceed any further but must wait and see whether anything new presents itself to it, and what this is, in order to cast it into the same abysmal void. But if, on the contrary, the result is comprehended as it truly is, as *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen...

[79]

Only from the point of view he is recommending can we make sense of the fact that in each experience of error something positive is learned. One of the pieces of the puzzle—and Hegel’s solution—that I hope to have added here is the understanding of how the representational dimension of conceptual content, no less than the expressive dimension, becomes intelligible in terms of the essential constitutive role determinate negation plays in the process of experience.

Nonetheless, we can ask: Why doesn’t Hegel’s account of experience as the experience of error, as the unmasking of what we took to reality as appearance, as the revelation of what was to subjects the way things are in themselves as merely how they are for consciousness provide exactly the premise needed for a fallibilist meta-induction? The fallibilist meta-induction is the inference that starts with the observation that every belief we have had or judgment we have made has eventually turned out to be false, at least in detail, and concludes that every belief or judgment we ever will or even could have will similarly eventually be found wanting—if we but subject it to sufficient critical scrutiny. Early on in the *Introduction*, Hegel tells us that this skeptical conclusion is a natural one for those who have not learned the lessons he is teaching us:

Natural consciousness will show itself to be merely the Concept of knowledge, or unreal knowledge. But since it immediately takes itself to be real knowledge, this pathway has a negative significance for it, and what is actually the realization of the Concept is for it rather the loss and destruction of its self: for on this road it loses its truth. The road may thus be viewed as the path of doubt, or, more properly, as the path of despair... [T]his road is the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge...[78]

What one needs to learn to see that this is the wrong conclusion is the central *semantic* significance of the experience of error for the intelligibility of the representational dimension of conceptual content. But to understand the positive significance of the unmasking of commitments as determinately mistaken, as misrepresentations since corrected, a substantive new conception of truth is required. That conception is developed in the body of the *Phenomenology*, and only hinted at in the introductory material. It is foreshadowed, however, already in the *Preface*.

Truth...includes the negative also, what would be called the false, if it could be regarded as something from which one might abstract. The evanescent itself must, on the contrary, be regarded as essential, not as something fixed, cut off from the True...

Appearance is the arising and passing away that does not itself arise and pass away, but is in itself, and constitutes actuality and the movement of the life of truth. [47]

Instead of thinking of truth as an achievable state or status, Hegel wants us to think of it as characteristic of a *process*: the process of *experience*, in which appearances “arise and pass

away.” They arise as appearances taken as veridical: ways things are for consciousness that are endorsed as how they are in themselves. When they are found to be materially incompatible with other commitments in the experience of error, some are rejected—a transformation of status that is the arising of the “second, true object”, the appearance as a *misrepresentation*, becoming *to* consciousness only how things are *for* consciousness. This process of weighing the credentials of competing commitments to determine which should be retained and which altered so as to remove local material incompatibilities *is* the process by which we find out (more about) how things really are.

The passage continues with a famous image:

The True is thus a Bacchanalian revel, with not a member sober; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose.⁸⁶

The revel is the restless elbowing of commitments discovered to be incompatible. Those that “drop out” are those that undergo the transformation of experience and are rejected in order to maintain the rational homeostasis that Hegel identifies as a state of “simple repose.” The party continues its movement and development, because the place of those that fall away is immediately taken by other commitments.

IV. Recollection and the *Science* of the Experience of Consciousness

8. This axial passage from the *Preface* continues in a way that introduces three themes with which I want to end my discussion:

⁸⁶ Das Wahre ist so der bacchantische Taumel, an dem kein Glied nicht trunken ist.

Judged in the court of this movement, the single shapes of Spirit do not persist any more than determinate thoughts do, but they are as much positive and necessary moments, as they are negative and evanescent.

In the *whole* of the movement, seen as a state of repose, what distinguishes itself therein, and gives itself particular existence, is preserved as something that *recollects* itself, whose existence is self-knowledge, and whose self-knowledge is just as immediately existence. [47]

First, the truth-process whose structure is that of the experience of error is the process by which conceptual contents develop and are determined. It is not just the process by which judgments are selected, but also the process by which concepts evolve. It is the process in and through which more and more of how the world really is, what is actually materially incompatible with what in the objective alethic sense becomes incorporated in material incompatibilities deontically acknowledged by subjects. For one's response to the acknowledged incompatibility of two commitments one finds oneself with often is to adjust one's commitments concerning what is incompatible with what (and so what follows from what). If my initial concept of an acid obliges me to apply it to any liquid that tastes sour, and applying it commits me to that liquid turning Litmus paper red, I might respond to a sour liquid that turns Litmus paper blue (and the incompatibility of those two color-commitments) not by rejecting either the perceptual judgment of sourness or the perceptual judgment of blue, but by revising the norms articulating my concept. I might, for instance, take it that only *clear* liquids that taste sour are acids, or that cloudy acids don't turn Litmus paper red. It is because and insofar as they inherit the results of many such experiences of error that the conceptual contents subjects acknowledge

and deploy track the objective conceptual articulation of the world as well as they do. That is why the experience of error is a truth-process.

The second point is that Hegel's invocation of *recollection* [Erinnerung], to which he returns at the very end of the *Phenomenology*, is a gesture at the *third* phase of the experience of error. We have already considered the first two: acknowledging the material incompatibility of some of one's commitments and revising one's commitments (including those concerning what is incompatible with what) so as to repair the discordance. What Hegel calls "recollection" is a subsequent rational reconstruction of the extended process of experience that has led to one's current constellation of commitments. What is reconstructed is a sequence of episodes, each of which exhibits the three-phase structure of acknowledgment, repair, and recollection of materially incompatible commitments one has endorsed. From the actual process of past experience the recollector selects a trajectory that is exhibited as expressively progressive—that is, as having the form of a gradual, cumulative revelation of how things really are (according to the recollector). It is a Whiggish story (characteristic of old-fashioned histories of science) of how the way things are in themselves came to be the way they veridically appeared *for* consciousness. That in this way the *past* is constantly turned into a *history* (differently with each tripartite episode of experience) is how Hegel understands reason as retrospectively "giving contingency the form of necessity."

The third point is that the recollection phase of experience is a crucial element in what Hegel calls (in [87]) the *science* of the experience of consciousness. So far in these chapters on the *Introduction* I have talked a lot about the experience of consciousness, but not officially

about the *science* of the experience of consciousness. This might well have led to some puzzlement. Why am I talking about the role in experience of mundane concepts such as bent stick and straight stick when the book Hegel is introducing us to focuses exclusively on concepts such as consciousness, self-consciousness, and agency (that is: cognitive authority, the social institution of authority, and practical authority)? Why have I been discussing the development of constellations of judgments and concepts when Hegel is concerned, at least in the second half of the *Introduction*, as in the *Phenomenology*, with the development of “shapes of consciousness”? Such questions, while understandable, are misplaced. Though I have not explicitly been talking *about* it, what I have been doing is an exercise of the “science of the experience of consciousness.” For that “science” is the explicit, self-conscious *understanding* of the “experience of consciousness.”

9. I take it that any understanding of Hegel (or Kant) must start with what he has to teach us about ordinary, ground-level empirical and practical experience—for him (as for Kant) a matter of applying what he calls “determinate concepts”. These are concepts like stick and straight, blue and sour. What he calls “speculative,” or “logical” concepts are theoretical philosophical metaconcepts whose distinctive expressive role it is to make explicit features of the conceptual contents and use (the semantics and pragmatics) of those ground-level concepts. The *Phenomenology* is a story about the development of those higher-level concepts in terms of which his readers (“phenomenological consciousness”) can be brought to comprehend discursive activity in general (“phenomenal consciousness”). The measure of our understanding of what he has to say on that topic lies principally in the sense we can use those metaconcepts to make of the whole constellation of conceptually articulated normative practice and institutions Hegel

calls “Spirit.” That is why I have started my story with what I take it he wants us ultimately to understand about the “experience of consciousness.”

Then, and I think *only* then and on that basis, we can consider what it is to render the development of *either* kind of concept in *scientific* terms, in Hegel’s sense of that term. To do that is to tell a certain kind of retrospective, rationally reconstructive story about their development—one that displays an expressively progressive *history*, made out of the *past*. This is the third phase of the process of experience, which is initiated by the acknowledgment of the material incompatibility of some commitments, proceeds through the local and temporary resolution of that incoherence by relinquishing or modifying some commitments, while retaining others, and culminates in comprehending the experience by situating it as the culmination of a process in which previous commitments show up as ever more revelatory, but still inadequate appearances *for* consciousness of what (one now takes it) things are *in* themselves. The capstone of Hegel’s account (at the end of the *Reason* chapter, and further at the end of the *Spirit* chapter) will be to show us how this retrospective rationally reconstructive *genealogical* phase of the process of experience means that such experience is at once *both* the (further) determining of the content of concepts (whether determinate or philosophical), in the sense of the expressive dimension of conceptual content (‘that’-intentionality) that is articulated by *relations* of determinate negation, *and* the discerning of referents (Bedeutungen, what things are in themselves) that are represented by such senses (Sinne, what things are for consciousness) along the representational dimension of conceptual content (‘of’-intentionality), as articulated by the

process that is the experience of error, normatively governed by relations of determinate negation.⁸⁷ That is a story for another occasion.

Hegel thinks that the only form a theoretical comprehension of the conceptual and representational content of a concept can take is such a genealogy of process of experience by which it is determined. This is true whether what is being addressed is a constellation of concepts-and-commitments at the meta-level of scientific self-consciousness, or at the ground-level of empirical consciousness. That is why he assimilates them in the *Preface* passage we have been considering:

Judged in the court of this movement, **the single shapes of Spirit** do not persist any more than **determinate thoughts** do, but they are as much positive and necessary moments, as they are negative and evanescent.

A proper meta-level account of the *experience* of consciousness is a *science* of the experience of (ground-level) consciousness. The *Phenomenology* recounts the *experience* of the science of the experience of consciousness: the process by which meta-concepts adequate to comprehend explicitly the process of experience are themselves developed and determined. We see Hegel asserting that the experience of error as here described is also the mechanism whereby new “shapes of consciousness” arise, in a passage we are now in a position to appreciate:

When that which at first appeared as the object sinks to the level of being to consciousness a knowledge of the object, and when the *in-itself becomes a being-for-consciousness of the in-itself*, then this *is* the new object. And with this new object a new Shape of consciousness also makes its appearance, a Shape to which the essence is something different from that which was

⁸⁷ Spirit is this movement of the Self which empties itself of itself and sinks itself into its substance, and also, as Subject, has gone out of that substance into itself, making the substance into an object and a content at the same time as it cancels this difference between objectivity and content. [M804]

the essence to the preceding Shape. It is this circumstance which guides the entire succession of the Shapes of consciousness in its necessity. But it is this necessity alone—or the emergence of the new object, presenting itself to consciousness without the latter's knowing how this happens to it—which occurs for us, as it were, behind its back. A moment which is both *in-itself and for-us* is thereby introduced into the movement of consciousness, a moment which does not present itself for the consciousness engaged in the experience itself. But the *content* of what we see emerging exists *for it*, and we comprehend only the formal aspect of what emerges or its pure emerging. *For consciousness*, what has emerged exists only as an object; *for us*, it exists at once as movement and becoming.

This, then, is the necessity in virtue of which the present road toward science is itself already a *science*. And, in accordance with its content, it may be called the science of the *experience of consciousness*. [87]

In these three chapters I have focused on what Hegel will have to say about the semantics and pragmatics of the concepts deployed and determined through base-level experience, by way of preparation for understanding the course of the experience of meta-level *self*-consciousness that he recollects for us in the body of the *Phenomenology*.

Part Three

Recollecting Hegel

Chapter Seven

Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel:

Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts

I. Introduction:

The enterprise animating this chapter is generically of the sort epitomized in Croce's title: to specify "what is living and what is dead in Hegel's philosophy." Two qualifications of this characterization are in order, however. First, the indefinite articles in my title are meant to indicate that I understand what one is doing in drawing such a distinction in a way that is at once more pluralistic and less final than that slogan suggests. I am proposing *one* way of distinguishing in Hegel's work large, orienting philosophical insights worth pursuing and developing today—what I see as the core of his achievement—from what show up against that background as optional collateral commitments, contingent choices as to how to work out the big ideas, as well as what as far as I can see are simply mistakes (albeit intelligible and forgivable ones). I do not at all suppose that there are not other ways of carving things up from which we might learn as much.

Further, I address here only one aspect of Hegel's multidimensional thought: exploiting fault-lines that appear when one considers the relations between his views about the contents of ordinary determinate empirical concepts, on the one hand, and his views about the contents of the specifically *logical*, philosophical, or speculative concepts in terms of which he elaborates his own views (concepts such as particularity, universality, and individuality, Ansichsein, and Fürsichsein) on the other.⁸⁸

Before launching into the discussion of this particular perspective on Hegel's thought, however, it is worth our taking note of a methodological worry that arises at the outset concerning the very idea of a *critical* reading of that thought: a reading, that is, that appropriates some of his philosophical concepts and claims, while ignoring or rejecting others. Specific, characteristic features of Hegel's views present a special obstacle to any such undertaking. For Hegel himself insists, explicitly and repeatedly, that his philosophical account presents a *system*. And one essential property of a system in this sense is a strong and distinctive sort of *holism* concerning the philosophical idiom in which it is expressed: no piece of it—no concept and no claim—can have the content that it does except in the context of *all* the rest.⁸⁹ The systematicity Hegel's philosophy aspires to and purports to exhibit, entails that it is, as we may say, *semantically monolithic*. That feature would make it impossible to chip off some bits from the

⁸⁸ In other I consider different such dimensions: Hegel's understanding of determinateness, in Chapter Nine, and his assimilation of concepts to selves, in Chapter Eight.

⁸⁹ Here I talk about the systematic metaphysics—basically, the logic. For various bits of the *Realphilosophie* Hegel presented in terms of those categories might, of course, be contested, while remaining firmly within the confines of the system. Thus Hegel himself seems to have approached the project of *applying* his categories to the empirical-historical matter of the development of the concepts and practices of religion, art, and natural science in an experimental spirit. Thus various versions of the lectures on the history of religion deploy his logical apparatus in different ways, once setting things up in terms of a progression from *Ansichsein* through *Fürsichsein* to *An-und-fürsichsein*, another time in terms of a progression from categories of Being, through Essence, to the Concept. (While these categories line up roughly, there are important differences of nuance between them, which come out in the applications.)

block. Attempting to pick and choose, to select and reject, would inevitably be to falsify.

Severed from the unique living conceptual organism to which they belong, the dead appendages could not perform their expressive function. The monolithic systematicity claim⁹⁰ is the biggest obstacle to the critical appraisal of Hegel's concepts and claims, and so their appropriation in our very different circumstances. But it has seemed to many to be of the very essence of Hegel's philosophical contribution, so that the whole scheme stands or falls with that claim. Rolf-Peter Horstmann, for instance, has eloquently appealed to this feature of Hegel's thought to argue that we must swallow it whole or not at all.⁹¹

The short form of my response to this objection that the systematic character of Hegel's thought precludes the possibility of a *critical* reading of it is that the first claim of his I want to reject—as the very first step in the critical enterprise—is just this claim about its semantically *monolithic* character. What if Hegel is *wrong* to think that *if* one can say at all what he is saying in the *rest* of the *Logic*, *then one must* say it in terms that are *systematic* in a sense that entails

⁹⁰ This holism does not exhaust Hegel's notion of systematicity. Another essential element is *comprehensiveness*: that every alternative account can be exhibited as a partial, inadequate version of the system, a stage in its development (as rationally reconstructed) that must be superseded on the way to, and so whose insights can be seen to be incorporated in, that system. Indeed, because of this feature of the scheme he presents, Hegel thinks it is inappropriate for us to call it *his* system—in the way in which he *does* allow talk of “Spinoza's system” or “Kant's system.” In virtue of its expressive developmental *comprehensiveness*, it should only be thought of as “*the* system”. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer discusses this point at pp. 30-31 in his fascinating and important *Hegels Analytische Philosophie* [Ferdinand Schöningh, München, 1992].

⁹¹ This claim is the gravamen of his chapter “What is Hegel's Legacy, and What Should We Do With It?” *European Journal of Philosophy* 7:2 (1999) pp. 275-287. Thus, because “Hegel's very ambitious and complicated version of an ontological monism is an essential part of his philosophical legacy,” (279) “Hegel's philosophical legacy consists in a very intricate combination of an impressive multitude of elements which in their entirety form one huge complex. To choose only some of these elements and to claim that just these constitute the philosophically important parts of his legacy means to have a very special notion of what could be done to a philosophical theory without changing its content so much that the theory has in fact been abandoned.” (284) Therefore, Horstmann concludes, “To deal with Hegel's philosophy in a rather selective way means not being very faithful to his will, to say the least” (285). Horstmann's recommended response to this situation is to reject the idea that Hegel left us a viable philosophical legacy: “Now ‘System-Philosophie in Hegel's sense has been out of fashion from his days on, and I take it that nobody nowadays really wants to give the ‘System’-version of a holistic approach in philosophy a second chance. If, however, there are good reasons to suppose that for Hegel the idea of a system was constitutive of a philosophical theory, then one wonders how it is possible to think of Hegel as a philosopher whose legacy is of some value for us.”(276)

being semantically monolithic? Of course, a “what if?” proves nothing. *Entitling* oneself to a response of this general shape (that is, relinquishing the commitment to Hegel’s thought having to take the shape of a *semantically monolithic* system) requires performing a dissection that distinguishes within Hegel’s system an autonomous, viable conceptual core from a discardable husk of optional collateral commitments, and further locates the strong holist aspect of the systematicity of the semantics of its *logical* and *philosophical* concepts and claims in that shell. Doing that would require specifying *what* other master-commitments or insights of Hegel’s can be made sense of apart from the systematicity claim, so as to see that they do *not* in fact require or entail it. How one might go about doing this should be clearer at the end of my story than it can be made at this point. But the short version is: good reasons to endorse a strong holism concerning the senses (but not the referents) of ordinary determinate concepts do *not* oblige one to adopt a corresponding thesis concerning the contents expressed by the logical and philosophical metavocabulary we use to discuss and explicate those ground-level concepts.

II. The First Move: A Distinction

The critical perspective on Hegel’s thought that I want to explore and expound here begins by comparing and contrasting Hegel’s views about the nature of the contents of ordinary determinate concepts with his views about the nature of the contents of what he calls “form determinations of the Concept”: logical, philosophical, and speculative concepts. The first category comprises the contents of the concepts expressed by our use of ordinary words, such as ‘red’, ‘rigid’, and ‘rotten’, and of the claims expressed by our use of ordinary declarative sentences containing them. These are the contents that articulate our everyday empirical

consciousness, both cognitive and practical, of the world around us, as well as the contents that articulate our everyday empirical *self*-consciousness of ourselves as creatures in that world: those expressed by words such as ‘self’, and ‘object’. The second category comprises the *logical* philosophical concepts and *speculative* philosophical claims whose development is the subject matter of both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*.

The relation between the two categories is, I think, an *expressive* one. To be a *logical* concept, for Hegel, is to play the distinctive expressive role of making explicit general features of the use and content of ordinary, *nonlogical* (‘determinate’) concepts.⁹² It is to be a certain kind of *metaconcept*. This is perhaps clearest in the use Hegel makes of his logical vocabulary in the *Realphilosophie*, but he believes quite generally that, as he puts the point in the *Encyclopedia*, “the whole progress of philosophizing in every case, if it be a methodical, that is to say a necessary, progress, merely renders explicit what is implicit in a notion.”⁹³ The principal point of his logic is to develop conceptual tools that are necessary and sufficient to express explicitly the essential structures that are implicit in our use of ordinary concepts (including those of the empirical sciences) in judgment and action. For Hegel, as for Kant, judging and acting just *is* applying concepts, and it is in virtue of that capacity that we are spiritual, rational, free creatures—that is, creatures able to undertake *commitments*, to take on *responsibilities* whose content is articulated in terms of what would count as *reasons* justifying them. So coming to be able to make explicit what is implicit in our concept use—to *say* and

⁹² Having appropriated from Hegel this conception of the characteristic expressive role that demarcates logical vocabulary as such, I motivate and expound it in its own right in the first chapter of *Articulating Reasons* [Harvard University Press, 2000], and develop and apply it in the rest of that work.

⁹³ *Encyclopedia Logic* [ref.], §88.

think what it is we have all along been *doing* in judging and acting—is achieving a distinctive sort of *self*-consciousness of ourselves as normative, rational, *geistig* beings.

One important ancestor of this fundamental distinction between kinds of concepts is Kant's division of labor between empirical concepts and the pure concepts of the understanding, that is, the categories. Of course, Kant understood the relations between these concepts and metaconcepts somewhat differently: the pure concepts or categories codify in explicit concepts (that is, ones that can themselves figure in judgments) the *forms* that are implicitly exhibited by all empirically contentful concepts as they figure in (explicit) empirical judgments. That is, in Kant's hylomorphic philosophical metametalanguage, the *content* of the pure categorial concepts expresses the *form* of the determinate empirical ones.

But for both figures I think it is good methodological advice to seek to understand the account offered of the metaconcepts to begin with in terms of what they tell us about the use and content of the ground-level concepts.

This is not always easy, since both Kant and Hegel spend a *lot* more time talking about the nature and contents of the concepts they want to use to explicate concept use than they do about concept use itself. So there is a natural temptation to follow their example, and worry more about, say, the deduction of the categories in Kant, or the problem of how to make a beginning and then conduct a progressive exposition of the system of logical concepts in Hegel, than about the picture being presented of how ordinary cognition and action should be conceived. But I think it is important to resist that temptation—at least sometimes—and so to enter this particular

hermeneutic circle at a different place from that we find in the first *Critique*, or Hegel's *Phenomenology* or *Logic*.

III. Two Claims about Empirical Concepts

I want, then, to start with two connected, original, overarching structural claims that I see Hegel putting forward about ordinary empirical concepts—claims which seem to me to hold particular promise in addressing issues of contemporary philosophical interest. The first concerns his particular way of understanding the sense in which the content made available to thought through the immediate deliverances of sense outruns any particular conceptualization of it. The second is his consequent account of what is required to grasp, express, or convey the contents of determinate empirical concepts.

Each of these phenomena takes the form of a *process*. In the first case, it is the process whereby immediacy is gradually and incompletely incorporated in the thoroughly mediated—that is, inferentially articulated—form of determinate-but-still-determinable concepts. That is the process whereby determinate conceptual norms are at once instituted and applied in judgments and actions.⁹⁴ In the second case, the process in question is a recapitulation as rational reconstruction of the first sort of process, which displays it as expressively progressive, as the gradual emerging into explicitness of a determinate conceptual content that can then be seen retrospectively as having been all along implicit in the tradition of applying and assessing applications of it. Hegel's term for this sort of process is '*Wiederholung*'. As I read him, Hegel thinks that it is only by engaging in processes of the first kind that we can manage to think or

⁹⁴ I discuss this process in another connection in Chapter Eight.

mean anything determinate, and it is only by engaging in processes of the second kind that we can *say* what we mean or think, making that content explicit to ourselves or others.

This second sort of enterprise depends on the use of some sort of logical vocabulary. The adequacy of a system of logical concepts is to be evaluated by its expressive capacity to make explicit the essential, content-determining features of both kinds of process or practice. Under the headings of '*Verstand*' and '*Vernunft*', Hegel introduces two meta-metaconcepts for classifying the most important kinds of logical metaconcepts. His own understanding of his distinctive philosophical contribution is epitomized in the slogan that the point of his work is to teach us how to understand our conceptual activity, and therefore ourselves, according to the categories of *Vernunft*, rather than those of *Verstand*. The two claims about the contents of empirical conceptual contents that we turn to next articulate central elements of the contrast between the metalogical standpoint of *Verstand* and that of *Vernunft*.

IV. The Conceptual Inexhaustibility of the Empirical: The Tradition

The tradition Hegel inherited took it that actual, concrete, determinate particularity could not be fully captured by the finite concepts deployed by nondivine minds. Their theoretical versions of the point start with the thought that although much of what I see when I look closely at my hand, or hear when I listen to a complex piece of music, can be expressed in judgments, no set of such judgments, certainly no *finite* set of judgments, can express *all* of it, without remainder. There will always be a residue that is as yet unsaid or unthought (sayable or

thinkable though each bit of it may be). There will always be more material to be conceptualized. We cannot *exhaustively* describe any particular as it is sensuously presented. Empiricists understood concepts as formed by abstraction. The richness and detail that must be ignored in order to produce abstract repeatable representations cannot then be fully reconstituted by finite conjunctions of such general classifications. Leibniz did think that there are fully individuating individual concepts corresponding to particulars—that particulars *are* unrepeatable *infimae species*—but also thought that only God could grasp such concepts. Created minds must do with finite, always extensible but always incomplete, collections of marks that remain essentially general in their signification. For Kant, conceptualizing the manifold of sensuous intuition—rendering its content in the form of judgments—is an infinite, in principle uncompletable task. Hegel says of this view:

In the field of the finite, absolute determinateness remains only a demand, a demand which the Understanding has to meet by continually increasing delimitation—a fact of the greatest importance—but which continues *ad infinitum* and which allows only of perennially approximate satisfaction.⁹⁵

Indeed, for Kant each empirical judgment is the application of a rule for synthesizing other representations that has potentially infinite consequences for the course of future experience. The failure of any of these would require relinquishing or amending the judgment. My claim that the animal I am looking at is a dog may successfully synthesize an indefinite stretch of future presented intuitions, but at every point the possibility still remains that further exposure to the individual may force me to withdraw the judgment and replace it with another, say, that it is in fact a fox. The result is accordingly a thorough-going fallibilism about empirical judgments.

⁹⁵ *Philosophy of Right*, §101 [Allen Wood (ed.), H. B. Nisbet (trans.); Cambridge University Press, 1991], p. 128].

This way of thinking about the relation between particular things and the determinate concepts they fall under—about the relation between immediacy and mediation—is characteristic of the standpoint of *Verstand*. On this conception, empirical judgments are *de facto* collectively *incomplete*. But a sufficiently comprehensive set of them—not available to us because it would have to be infinite⁹⁶—might not be. And each empirical judgment is individually prone to the possibility of *error*. But any individual judgment might also be wholly true and correct, even though we can never be *sure* of any particular one that it is. One of the most interesting, original, and radical, but also among the most difficult aspects of the conceptual transformation to the standpoint of *Vernunft* that Hegel urges on us concerns the successor conception he proposes to this traditional combination of epistemological fallibilism and acknowledgement of the *de facto* conceptual inexhaustibility of the empirical.

As a point of entry into the topic, we might consider two extreme views one might have about Hegel's final position on the nature of determinate concepts and the empirical claims they figure in, according to which there is no interesting successor conception to the traditional one available to be investigated. According to the first, or *eliminative* interpretation, it is only from the defective viewpoint of *Verstand* that there *are* any determinate claims or concepts. We are supposed to give up that delusion when we pass to the more adequate perspective of *Vernunft*. According to the second, or *quietist* interpretation, absolutely nothing changes at the object level when we pass at the metalevel from employing categories of *Verstand* to employing categories of *Vernunft* in *understanding* or *expressing* what is going on in ground-level application of determinate concepts in empirical judgment. On the eliminative reading, issues about fallibilism and the incompleteness of the empirical enterprise lapse, not because a successor conception is

⁹⁶ And the whole set is not entailed by any finite subset of it: a failure of a certain kind of *compactness*.

required but because the enterprise itself is revealed as ill-conceived. On the quietist reading, the *phenomena* of empirical inexhaustibility and fallibility persist, although the terms in which they are described evolve in concert with Hegel's other metatheoretical innovations.

I don't think either of these approaches is sustainable. The eliminative view cannot be right, because it is clear that even after we have learned the lessons of the Logic, language remains "the existence of Spirit".⁹⁷ We are still supposed to use declarative sentences to express ourselves, as Hegel does when applying the conceptual apparatus of the Logic to nonlogical material in the lectures on aesthetics, religion, and the philosophy of nature. And Hegel remained actively interested in introducing new words for distinctive empirical phenomena—for instance the term 'entoptic', which he coined in 1817, to describe colors newly discovered to appear in transparent media when they are heated (an innovation for which Goethe praised him extravagantly).⁹⁸ The process of forming, applying, and criticizing determinate empirical concepts and claims in natural science, for instance, is clearly supposed to continue even after we have achieved the sort of self-consciousness about that process that Hegel's logic affords—as evidenced by his dedication to support and promulgate such research in the Hegelian *Yearbook of Scientific Criticism* he edited from 1826 to 1831 (for instance, in its treatment of the researches of the Humboldts).

But the quietist view, according to which no ground-level change at all is supposed to be occasioned by that new philosophical self-understanding cannot be right either. For one aspect of *Verstand* that we must give up in order to achieve the perspective of *Vernunft* is the *semantic atomism* that sees the determinate identity of empirical concepts as wholly unaffected by the

⁹⁷ *Phenomenology*, Miller paragraph 652, p. 395.

⁹⁸ *Hegel: the Letters* Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (trans.) [Indiana University Press, 1984].

judgments applying them that we endorse. According to Hegel's holistic successor conception, we must understand change of beliefs and change of concepts as going hand-in-hand, and think about the progressive evolution of *the* Concept: the holistic constellation of determinate claims-and-concepts comprising both doxastic and inferential commitments. Doing that means giving up the idea that we can change the judgments we make or the claims we endorse while holding onto the very same determinate conceptual contents that were in play beforehand. If Goethe had managed to establish that a common mechanism accounts both for entoptic and epoptic colors, the result would not just have been new judgments, but a re-determination of the contents of those concepts.⁹⁹

V. The Conceptual Inexhaustibility of the Empirical: Hegel

Hegel's own alternative to the traditional approach is neither eliminativist nor quietist about the incompleteness of the enterprise of empirical knowledge. As I read him, Hegel has a big new idea—a striking and strikingly original successor conception to that of his precursors. For him, I want to claim, the richness and fecundity of the immediate sensuous experience of particulars—the way it is bound to overflow any conceptual classification—is manifested primarily not in its necessary *inexhaustibility* by any finite set of empirical *judgments*, but rather in the necessary *instability* of any set of determinate empirical *concepts*. There is and can in principle be no set of determinate concepts whose *correct* application in empirical judgment will not eventually require us to revise and reject some of them. For that reason, any set of determinate empirical judgments is not only *incomplete* and *fallible*, but is guaranteed to be *incorrect*. That is, it not only *must omit* some claims that *are* true and *may* contain some claims

⁹⁹ See “Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism...” *op. cit.*

that are *not* true, it *must* contain some claims that are *not* true. In short, as I want to put the point, Hegel is not just an *epistemic fallibilist* about the truth of empirical *judgments*, but a *semantic pessimist* about the adequacy of empirical *concepts*. It is not just that we are necessarily *ignorant* of some truths and possibly in *error* about others, the necessary inadequacy and incorrectness of our *concepts* means we are *necessarily* in error.

Hegel thinks that a truly critical philosophy should investigate—as he takes it none of his predecessors, including Kant, had done—the nature and conditions of the possibility of *determinate contents* of thoughts and the worldly states of affairs they present. His thought is that by doing that we might be able to find or craft a concept of content that could, at least in favored cases, intelligibly be understood to be shared by a *thought*, judgment, or commitment that *p*, on the one hand, and the *fact* that *p*, on the other.

Doing that would, in turn, make possible a better picture of the possibility of genuine knowledge of how things really are than he takes it results if we start with one kind of thing, subjects or their representings, confronting another kind of thing, objects represented, across what is inevitably an ontological and epistemological gap. As I argue in Chapter Four, the opening paragraphs of the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* make it clear that Hegel thought Kant’s transcendental idealism should be understood as inexorably following out the logic implicit in such a picture, rather than as overcoming or replacing it.

Hegel endorses the Spinozist principle “*Omnis determinatio est negatio.*” For him, *determinateness* of content—whether of judgments and concepts on the subjective side of

certainty, or of facts and properties on the objective side of truth—is always a matter of *exclusive* [ausschliessend] *contrast* with, the ruling out of, other possibilities. These fundamental relations of material incompatibility, what he calls “determinate negation”, in turn give rise to material *inferential* relations among the contents they articulate: what he calls “mediation”. So for instance being a dog entails being a mammal in that everything incompatible with being a mammal is incompatible with being a dog. To be determinate or determinately contentful just is to stand in relations of material incompatibility and material inference to other such determinately contentful items—whether on the side of thoughts or of facts. These relations are intrinsically modally robust: incompatibilities are *impossibilities* of coinstantiation, and the inferences they generate are *counterfactual*-supporting. It is as a consequence of this way of thinking about determinate contentfulness that Hegel secures the result that was so important to Kant, namely that we can never be in the supposed position from which Hume’s question is asked: one in which determinate empirical thoughts or states of affairs are fully in place, but the question of how *lawful* or *necessary* relations among them are to be underwritten is still open.

It is also an approach that rules out the semantic atomism on which Enlightenment epistemology was predicated. For that traditional picture took it that a stock of determinate concepts could be available to the inquirer, out of which judgments could be constructed that then could be sorted—fallibly to be sure—into true ones and false ones. The gradual accumulation of truths and winnowing of falsehoods then permitted the building of the edifice of scientific knowledge, brick by brick. But according to a conception of, in Sellars’ phrase¹⁰⁰, “concepts as involving laws and inconceivable without them,” the identity and individuation of concepts does not swing free of the judgments we endorse concerning lawful connections among

¹⁰⁰ [ref. to “Concepts as Involving Laws and Inconceivable Without Them”, in *PPPW*]

them—paradigmatically, for Hegel, their modally robust material incompatibilities with and entailments of other concepts. Cognitive progress cannot then be construed just as the accumulation of true judgments, but must include also the shaping and improvement of the concepts that articulate those judgments. Besides the possibility of having incomplete or incorrect *judgments*, we have to worry about whether we have gotten the *concepts* right. So the old picture of knowledge is undercut by Hegel’s approach to content. For him, the soft underbelly of Enlightenment epistemology is its implicit semantics.

This is the line of thought that leads Hegel to the holistic idea that the unit of cognition is not individual judgments or determinate concepts, but what he called “the Concept”: the whole evolving constellation of claims-and-concepts, of doxastic, incompatibility, and inferential commitments. That it develops and changes—not just in the judgments it includes, but in the concepts they involve—is a consequence of its being articulated in terms of relations of material incompatibility or determinate negation. Giving up the picture of the contents of determinate concepts as settled independently and in advance of their modal connections to one another leads Hegel to think of them as *dynamic*, as changing (not just being selected) in response to other changes in our commitments. For the engine of conceptual evolution is the possibility that applying determinate empirical concepts in the context of collateral commitments, including the other judgments that are available for use as auxiliary hypotheses in multipremise inferences, can lead to commitments that are *incompatible*, according to the contents of the concepts involved. And the practical significance of that incompatibility—what it is for a subject to take or treat such commitments *as incompatible*—is an obligation to *do* something, to alter or relinquish some of the commitments that led to the predicament. This is the process Hegel (in the Introduction to

the *Phenomenology*) calls ‘experience’—‘Erfahrung’, not the episodic ‘Erlebnis’ appealed to by the empiricist tradition.¹⁰¹

It is also the process of *determination* of the content of empirical concepts, whereby immediacy—how things really are, what is really incompatible with what, and what really follows from what—gets incorporated into those contents, *making* them (more) determinate. Thus if I have a concept acid* that is determinate in having as modally robust conditions of application that if something tastes sour then it is an acid*, and as modally robust consequences of application that if something is an acid* then it will turn Litmus paper red, I can be led by the immediate deliverances of sense (judgments I find myself with responsively, *noninferentially*) to commitments that are incompatible by my own lights if I run across a liquid that tastes sour but turns Litmus paper blue. In the context of the hypothesized commitments, the world is then telling me that I cannot have the concept acid* with the exclusions and entailments I started out with. As Hegel says:

We learn by experience that we meant something other than we meant to mean; and this correction of our meaning compels our knowing to go back to the proposition, and understand it in some other way.¹⁰²

If I respond by altering the concept—say by restricting the inference involved to *clear* liquids, or to ones that also pass a further test—a bit of how the world really is gets built into my concept. By undergoing such a process, engaging in such a practice, articulated by relations of material incompatibility and inference, I don’t just accumulate true judgments, I get better concepts—ones whose constitutive incompatibilities and inferences better track the way things really are.

¹⁰¹ This is the sense invoked in the original title of the *Phenomenology*: “The Science of the Experience of Consciousness.”

¹⁰² [PG M63].

The point is that for Hegel, first, determinateness of content is articulated in terms of his understanding of negation, and second, negation involves two essentially interdependent aspects: *relations* of modally robust exclusion or material incompatibility, and *processes* of concept revision in experience, in response to finding oneself with incompatible commitments.¹⁰³ The existence of the content-articulating relations of exclusion just consists in the liability of the contents so articulated to revision through the experience of error. This is why “The distinct content, as determinate...is its own restless process of superseding itself, or negativity,”¹⁰⁴ and why “determinateness, with its concrete life...is an activity that results in its own dissolution,”¹⁰⁵ and “determinateness...is...the self-moving soul of the realized content.”¹⁰⁶ Determinate content is “what is alive within itself;”¹⁰⁷ it is “Becoming.”¹⁰⁸ It is what Hegel means by talking about “specific Notions and their organic, self-grounded movement,”¹⁰⁹ “the rhythm of the movement of the content,”¹¹⁰ “the rational element and rhythm of the organic whole,”¹¹¹ and by saying that “in speculative [begreifenden] thinking...the negative belongs to the content itself, and is the positive, both as the immanent movement and determination of the content, and as the whole of this process,”¹¹² and that “the self-moving concrete shape makes itself into a simple determinateness...its concrete existence is just this movement...The form is the innate development of the concrete content itself.”¹¹³ It is why “appearance is the arising and passing

¹⁰³ See the extended discussion of this point in “Holism and Idealism in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*”, op. cit..

¹⁰⁴ [PG M805].

¹⁰⁵ [PG M54].

¹⁰⁶ [PG M53].

¹⁰⁷ [PG M47].

¹⁰⁸ [EL §88].

¹⁰⁹ [PG M805].

¹¹⁰ [PG M57].

¹¹¹ [PG M56].

¹¹² [PG M59].

¹¹³ [PG M56].

away that does not itself arise and pass away, but...constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life of truth,"¹¹⁴ and why "The evanescent itself must...be regarded as essential, not as something fixed, cut off from the True, and left lying who knows where outside it, any more than the True is to be regarded as something on the other side, positive and dead."¹¹⁵

VI. Weak and Strong Versions of Hegelian Conceptual Dynamism

The *dynamic* character of determinate concepts, which underwrites the semantic pessimism that is Hegel's successor-conception to the Enlightenment epistemic incompleteness and fallibilism version of empirical inexhaustibility can be understood in at least two different ways. For there are weaker and stronger versions of the thought that it is in the inadequacy and instability of every constellation of empirical concepts—the way each such system breaks down and point beyond itself to another—that the conceptual inexhaustibility of the empirical consists. The less committive reading merely extracts the consequences of Hegel's broadly inferentialist holism, according to which changing the claims or judgments one endorses alters the inferential significance of those endorsements, and hence the concepts that articulate their contents. This is a Quinean line of thought.¹¹⁶ If meanings or conceptual contents must be individuated at least as finely as roles in material inferences, and if those inferential roles depend on what else one takes to be *true*, since that determines what auxiliary hypotheses are available for extracting consequences, then changes of belief can bring with them changes of meaning. Further, material inference is non-monotonic: adding more premises can not only make new conclusions available, it can make old ones unavailable. The inference from the premises that

¹¹⁴ [PG M47].

¹¹⁵ [PG M47].

¹¹⁶ See Chapter Eight.

this match is dry and well-made to the conclusion that if I strike it, it will probably light may be a materially good one, even though if we add to the premises that it is in a very strong magnetic field, that conclusion would not follow.¹¹⁷ That formal feature of material inferences means that *ignorance* is as corrosive to correct inference as is *error*.¹¹⁸ Adding new bits of knowledge is in principle as transformative of inferential roles, and hence conceptual contents, as discovering the falsehood of some of one's beliefs. In the context of such a holism about the inferential articulation of any system of claims-and-concepts, then, the traditional Enlightenment understanding of the inexhaustibility of the empirical—that any empirically accessible set of true judgments is bound to be incomplete, to omit some truths that are not simply consequences of the ones it already contains—has the in-principle instability of any set of empirical concepts as a straightforward consequence.

Each new empirical belief we acquire may require us to alter our inferential commitments, and so our concepts.

I call this conception of “the inner life and self-movement” of determinate empirical concepts a ‘weak’ version because of the ‘may’ in that last formulation. The addition of any new bit of knowledge *may* require a change of concepts. But it need not. It may be entirely compatible with our prior beliefs, and bring in its train no alteration in the counterfactual-supporting inference potentials of other sentences. Producing *all* the true empirical judgments is a Fichtean infinite task. As such, it is not completable by us. But there is a sense in which this is a merely practical difficulty. At least the notion of the totality of true empirical judgments makes sense.

¹¹⁷ For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Chapter Two of *Articulating Reasons*.

¹¹⁸ I argue for this claim in “Unsuccessful Semantics” *Analysis* Vol. 54 No. 3 (July 1994) pp. 175–8.

Likewise, on this line of thought, the notion of a complete and correct set of determinate empirical concepts—a scheme that endorsing further judgments by applying those concepts correctly in new experiences would never lead us to correct—is perfectly coherent. We are, to be sure, not likely to achieve such a conceptual scheme, and in the nature of the case could not be in a position to *know* that we had achieved it, even if in fact we had. But this is only semantic *fallibilism*, not yet semantic *pessimism*. It adds to traditional epistemic fallibilism only the minimal lessons required by rejecting the semantic atomism of the Enlightenment.

But Hegel might be putting forward a much more radical view. He might be giving us more than just a semantically sophisticated holistic version of the standard epistemological observation that “nature shows us a countless number of individual forms and phenomena”¹¹⁹ or “nature...runs on into endless detail in all directions.”¹²⁰ When he says, for instance, that “In this motley play of the world...there is nowhere a firm footing to be found,”¹²¹ he might not mean just that we can’t be *sure* that what seems now to be firm won’t at a later point slip. Some of his formulations suggest that he is putting forward the much stronger claim that the very idea of an adequate, stable system of determinate empirical concepts is deeply incoherent. On this line, thinking that that idea *does* make sense is just the root mistake of metametatheoretical attitude of *Verstand*. What we must realize to move to the standpoint of *Vernunft* is that we will *always* and *necessarily* be led to contradict ourselves by applying determinate concepts *correctly*—no matter how the world happens to be—and that it is in just this fact that the true nature of the immediacy, particularity, and actuality revealed to us in experience consists.

¹¹⁹ [EL §21Z].

¹²⁰ [EPN Introduction, before §245].

¹²¹ [EL§123].

the Antinomies are not confined to the four special objects taken from
Cosmology: they appear in all objects of every kind, in all conceptions, notions,
Ideas....The principles of the metaphysical philosophy gave rise to the belief that,
when cognition lapsed into contradictions, it was a mere accidental aberration,
due to some subjective mistake in argument and inference.¹²²

The proper conclusion is rather that “thought in its very nature is dialectical, and, as
understanding, it must fall into contradiction,”¹²³ or, more alarmingly, that “For anything to be
finite is just to suppress itself and put itself aside...everything finite, instead of being stable and
ultimate, is rather changeable and transient...All things—that is, the finite world as such—are
doomed.”¹²⁴ On such a conception, the inexhaustible richness of empirical particularity
essentially manifests itself in the *transformation, alteration, and development* of determinate
concepts that is the process of experience.

On this reading, when Hegel says of the concrete that “the true, thus inwardly
determinate, has the urge to develop,”¹²⁵ and that “The Understanding, in its pigeon-holing
process, keeps the necessity and the Notion of the content to itself—all that constitutes the
concreteness, the actuality, the living movement of the reality which it arranges,”¹²⁶ he means
that *no* concepts with fixed, determinate boundaries can capture how things are in a way that will
not turn out to require eventual revision. The case of the defective concept of acid* sketched
above is not exceptional. We will *always* “learn by experience that we meant something other

¹²² [EL §48].

¹²³ [EL§11].

¹²⁴ [EL§81].

¹²⁵ Berlin Introduction (1820) to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (p. 20 [32])

¹²⁶ [PG M53].

than what we meant to mean,” and so be obliged to “correct our meaning”.¹²⁷ We are always, and in principle, not just epistemically, but semantically *in medias res*. Coming to understand this is learning to think with the concept of the “true infinite” of *Vernunft*, in place of the “spurious infinite”, which is the “infinite of the understanding”¹²⁸, identified with the “perennial ought” and the “progress to infinity”¹²⁹ of *Verstand*. The difference is a matter of how we *understand* finite determinateness, and the infinity that it implicitly contains.

This view should not, I think, be thought of addressed to empirical concepts individually or one by one. There is no reason I cannot sort objects into those that do or do not qualify as *rigid*, or as *having a mass greater than that of the Sun*. It is only when those classifications are suitably related—by material incompatibility and material consequence—to other classifications in a sufficiently large constellation of them, that their necessary instability, their *essentially* provisional character, shows itself. The claim is rather about whole articulated *systems* of claims-and-concepts, doxastic commitments and inferential commitments relating them. So the thought in question cannot even come into view as an alternative until and unless one has given up the semantic atomism of Hegel’s predecessors. The idea is that there could in principle be no *autonomous* practices of applying concepts—a set of practices one could have though one had no other conceptually articulated ones—that will not show itself in need of repair in response to non-inferential (in Hegel’s terminology “immediate”) applications of them to particulars. And that is not because those applications are *mistaken*, by the lights of the practices to which they belong. Rather, applications of them that are *correct* by those lights will lead to incompatible commitments.

¹²⁷ [PG M63].

¹²⁸ [SL p. 139].

¹²⁹ [SL p. 142].

The idea is that at *every* stage in the development of an autonomous system of empirical concepts there lie ahead doxastic commitments (applications of concepts in judgment) that are *correct* according to the norms then in play and that are *incompatible* with various other correct applications of them. Any sufficiently comprehensive set of determinate concepts will, if applied in practice, result in *experience*, that is, the discovery of *error* requiring the subsequent adjustment not only of previously undertaken judgments, but also of the inferential commitments articulating them, and therefore of the concepts themselves.

The most precise version of such a claim about a distinctive form of the outrunning of the mediated (conceptual) by the immediate (actual) that I can come up with is this.

Empirical Inexhaustibility as Strong Conceptual Instability (EISCI):

For any sufficiently comprehensive, potentially autonomous, inferentially articulated system of determinate claims-and-concepts *S*,

there is a particular *p* in the world to which the concepts apply and

there are concepts *C*, *C'* in *S* such that mediation and immediacy collide in that either:

- ai) in the context of *S* (i.e. of the collateral commitments it comprises, both doxastic and inferential), the applicability of *C* to some particular is *materially incompatible* with the applicability of *C'* to it,

and

aii) *C* and *C'* both *immediately* (according to the non-inferential reporting practices of *S*) *apply* to *p*;

or

- bi) in the context of *S* (i.e. of the collateral commitments it comprises, both doxastic and inferential), the applicability of *C* to some particular *materially entails* the applicability of *C'* to it, and

bii) *C* does and *C'* does *not immediately* (according to the non-inferential reporting practices of *S*) apply to *p*.

It is, of course, contingent whether we would ever, in pursuing the practices of that system of claims-and-concepts, run across the fatal particular, and whether if so we would in fact confront it with the relevant concepts. But what is *not* contingent, on the line being considered, is that the particulars and concepts that would show the inadequacy of the conceptual scheme are out there, awaiting discovery. What makes the concepts that play roles in the conceptual scheme *determinate* is that they incorporate features of how the world really is—what follows from what and what is incompatible with what. They come to do that by a process of *experience*, that is, of *error*, of the sort exemplified by the story about the defective concept acid*, and characterized by the EISCI principle just formulated. The empirical world is conceptually inexhaustible in the sense that there is always more experience of that sort to be had, more of the world to be incorporated into our determinate concepts by the experience of error. “For the notion does not, as understanding supposes, stand still in its own immobility. It is rather an infinite form, of boundless activity.”¹³⁰

In the botanization I have been suggesting, this distinctive Hegelian view is denominated “strong semantic pessimism.” It is a form of *pessimism* rather than merely *modesty* or *fallibilism* because it concerns *error*, rather than *ignorance* or *uncertainty*—*incorrectness*, not just *incompleteness*. It is *semantic* rather than *epistemic*, in that it concerns *concepts* and their

¹³⁰ [EL§166].

contents, rather than *judgments* and their *truth*. It is *strong* rather than *weak* because the defect it alleges is *necessary* and *in principle*, not just *contingent* and *in practice*. One might prefer to call the view “strong conceptual dynamism,” since it is not pessimistic in the sense of denying us access to something that we either need or could have. But I’ll stick to the other terminology for this manifestation of Hegel’s Romantic expressivism.

I think this strong semantic pessimism is at the very core of the reconceptualization of conceptualization that Hegel invokes under the heading of ‘*Vernunft*’—and which it is, on my view, the task of the Logic, the study of the “form determinations of the Concept”, to make explicit. One of the essential, defining features of *Verstand*, the traditional standpoint that Hegel means to lead us beyond, is its commitment to the possibility in principle of a set of empirical concepts that is ideally adequate in that no course of experience would ever oblige us to modify those concepts, as inquiry went about fallibly and revisably sorting judgments resulting from the application of those concepts into true ones and false ones. (Whether we could ever be sure we had hit upon such a set of concepts doesn’t matter for this thought). Even on the weaker reading, Hegel is urging—on the basis of a holist (because inferentialist-incompatibilist), recognizably Quinean, rethinking of the relation between judgments and concepts, between epistemic assessments of truth and the semantic contents of concepts—that cognitive progress must be thought of not just as making more true and fewer false judgments, but also as grooming and improving our concepts, that epistemic progress must also be conceptual progress. On the stronger reading he is making a far more radical and interesting claim: that a proper appreciation of empirical inexhaustibility—of the way in which immediate (non-inferential) presentations of sensuously available particulars necessarily outrun attempts to capture them in thought—must

take the form not just of the incompleteness of the project of expressing them fully in judgments, but further of the collective instability of any set of concepts we might employ in an attempt to do so. I have here said next to nothing about the crucial question of why one might endorse a view of this sort, and how it might be justified.¹³¹ My concern in the present context has been just to get it on the table. But those sufficiently familiar with the tradition will recognize that I have been venturing into the hairiest, scariest regions of Hegelian metaphysics: the bits that have led many, for instance, the less thoughtful Marxists (a category that does not always exclude Marx himself) to attribute to Hegel the view that the world itself is contradictory, inconsistent, that it always and necessarily exhibits incompatible objective properties, and led even somewhat more cautious readers to see him as claiming that the world is protean, mutable, fleeting, so bound to evade our conceptual grasp. I hope it is clear that from the point of view of the semantic reading in terms of empirical inexhaustibility that I have been proposing, such interpretations result from a failure to free oneself from, or see alternatives to, the sort of understanding of the nature of *determinateness* Hegel takes to be characteristic of Enlightenment *Verstand*.

VII. Truth, Determinateness, and Skepticism

One might think that *strong semantic pessimism* in this sense would straightforwardly entail *epistemological skepticism*. Perhaps surprisingly, it does not. The point is an important one, because Hegel is clear throughout his writings that he not only does not consider himself a

¹³¹ Pursuing this point would require going more deeply into how things stand between the objective relation of incompatibility side of the concept of *negativity* and the subjective movement of experience side of it, and their relations to the movement of understanding of relations of incompatibility that Hegel calls “traversing the moments.” Some of the raw materials for such an enterprise are presented in “Holism and Idealism...”, op. cit..

skeptic, but that he considers avoiding skepticism a principal criterion of adequacy of philosophical thought. Appreciation of the way thought advances by uncovering contradictions is not to be a “way of despair”.¹³² But why not? It seems no help on this point to say that determinate negations lead to positive results, if every one of those positive results in turn leads to further determinate negations: materially incompatible commitments. Even what has been called the “fallibilist metainduction”—that since all our prior theories have turned out to be false, we ought to expect all our future ones to do the same—has been thought a counsel of despair. And Hegel’s semantic pessimism is far stronger and more principled (it is an *a priori* claim about ultimate intelligibility).

Indeed, holism raises the skeptical stakes substantially, even for the weaker form of semantic pessimism. For if getting the right concepts depends on getting the inferences right, and getting the inferences right depends on having all and only true judgments as auxiliary hypotheses, then the correctness of our inferences is held hostage not only to the *correctness* of our judgments (brought into question already by epistemic fallibilism), but to their *completeness* (brought into question by already by traditional ways of understanding the conceptual inexhaustibility of the empirical), given the non-monotonicity of multipremise material inferences. And concepts that are incorrect in the sense that their contents incorporate incorrect inferences—concepts like the defective acid*—are not literally true of anything, and so not fit for framing *any* true ground-level judgments. Thus, someone who does not accept a great deal of Aristotle’s world-view cannot accept that there *are* any things that have all and only the properties he attributed to, say, *brains*, as inseparable parts of organisms, and so ought to deny that, strictly speaking, he would have been saying something *true* when he said that he had two

¹³² [PG M77].

hands (not because he doesn't have two of something, but because nobody could, strictly speaking, have *any* of what he meant by 'χειρ'—just as there aren't any witches, even though there were people who were called 'witch'). The strong semantic pessimist goes on to claim that *all* sufficiently comprehensive conceptual schemes contain concepts like this, and since the rest are inferentially related to them, the rot can hardly be contained.¹³³ Why isn't this not only a skeptical result—but worse, the endorsement of a particularly virulent sort of *semantic* skepticism? *Epistemological* skepticism may then appear as only one of the milder and more benign consequences of such a view. For not only our possession of *knowledge* but the intelligibility of the notion of *true* judgment seems to be ruled out, along with even the intelligibility of the very idea that our thoughts have *determinate* contents.

In fact, Hegel's affirmation of the necessary instability of empirical concepts is compatible with his making sense both of the *determinateness* of concepts and of empirical *truth* and *knowledge*. But securing that compatibility requires radically reconstruing the concepts of determinateness, and truth. One crucial element of that reconstrual is that *determinateness* must no longer be thought of as a property an individual empirical concept can have all on its own (as, for instance, determinateness is on its Fregean construal as the possession of sharp boundaries of appropriate application or extension), apart from its synchronic inferential relations to other such concepts and apart from its diachronic developmental relations to its predecessors and successors in a progressive tradition bound together by experiential transformations of a holistic system of

¹³³ I think Hegel does endorse something like this line of thought, but only as half the story. In one sense, all of our determinate judgments *are* false, and all of our actions are failures. But in another sense, all those judgments are true and all those actions successful. To understand Hegel's concept of determinateness requires understanding the relations between the two perspectives. But that's another story.

claims-and-concepts. And the locus and unit of *truth* (and so of knowledge) can no longer be identified as the *judgment*.

So how should we think about truth? The previous discussion has put us in a position to add a dimension to the famous passage from the Preface of the *Phenomenology* (some bits of which have already been quoted), which was discussed already in Chapter Six:

This truth therefore includes the negative also, what would be called the false, if it could be regarded as something from which one might abstract. The evanescent itself must, on the contrary, be regarded as essential, not in the determination of something fixed,¹³⁴ cut off from the True, and left lying who knows where outside it, any more than the True is to be regarded as something on the other side, positive and dead. Appearance is the arising and passing away that does not itself arise and pass away, but is 'in itself', and constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life of truth. **The True is thus a vast Bacchanalian revel with not a soul sober;** yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose. Judged in the court of this movement, the single shapes of Spirit do not persist any more than determinate thoughts do, but they are as much positive and necessary moments, as they are negative and evanescent. In the whole of the movement, seen as a state of repose, what distinguishes itself therein, and gives itself particular existence, is preserved

¹³⁴ “ nicht in der Bestimmung eines Festen...”

as something that recollects itself, whose existence is self-knowledge, and whose self-knowledge is just as immediately existence.¹³⁵

This passage directly addresses, not the development of determinate empirical concepts, but of the “shapes of Spirit”, which are structured by metatheoretic idioms for making sense of what is going on at the ground level of applying ordinary concepts in judgment and action. But I want to suggest, as the penultimate sentence perhaps confirms, that what is said here about *philosophical* concepts and the practices they are embedded in applies also at the ground level. (I will have something more explicit to say about this parallel below.)

Truth is thought of here not as a special, desirable *property* of judgments, but as a distinctive sort of *process* of transforming concepts (and so, judgments). It is the conception that goes along with the shift from thinking of experience as a kind of self-correcting process (Erfahrung) rather than as a kind of self-intimating episode (Erlebnis). To understand truth this way, we must understand the “movement of the life of truth”, which is its actuality, and not look for something that is determinate in the sense of being fixed or static. Rather, truth is to be found in the way in which successor concepts concretely *improve* upon their predecessors. In this sort of expressively progressive process, the evanescent [das Verschwindende, what disappears], what shows itself to be cognitively incorrect, not only judgments found to be false, but concepts found to be inadequate, is an essential element. That each individual commitment, doxastic or inferential, eventually shows itself to be an appearance that must ultimately be rejected is the experience of error, finding oneself with commitments that are incompatible by one’s own lights,

¹³⁵ [PG M47]. I have adjusted the translation somewhat, in part out of admiration for Baillie’s memorable rendering of the key passage: “Das Wahre ist so der bacchantische Taumel, an dem kein Glied nicht trunken ist; und weil jedes, indem es sich absondert, ebenso unmittelbar [sich] auflöst, ist er ebenso die durchsichtige und einfache Ruhe.”

that is the motor of the truth-process. Truth is not a matter of getting things right (once and for all), but of getting things righter (at every stage). Hegel's strong semantic pessimism, his conceptual dynamism, means that truth for him is a kind of progress, something you make, rather than something you have—a feature first of what you are doing, and only derivatively of what you have done. And the comparatives involved in the assessments of conceptual progress do not take absolutes in Unger's sense—to use his homey examples, they are not like “flatter than”, which can be paraphrased as “more nearly perfectly flat”, but like “bumpier than”, which cannot be paraphrased as “more nearly perfectly bumpy”.¹³⁶

The “Bacchanalian revel” is an image for the lively interactions of concepts and claims (which are applications of those concepts), as each new commitment alters its relations to each other. Their drunkenness signifies the weaving trajectories that result from those interactions, the impossibility of any member's executing a prior plan for consecutive movements, the restless, unintentional elbowings of one another that contribute to the resulting, unpredictable evolution of the whole company. The integrity of the ongoing affair is maintained, however, for as soon as one participant has fallen exhausted and immobile beneath the table, beyond further participation—a concept showing itself inadequate and unsustainable, the commitments it incorporates accordingly dissolving—its place is taken by another, fresher reveler bringing renewed (though still temporary) vigor to the fete. Joining, sustaining, and leaving the animated conversation is the “arising and passing away that does not itself arise and pass away, but... constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life” of the party. The Concept, like an

¹³⁶ The fact that ‘flat’ and ‘bumpy’ are complementary contradictory predicates—with *flat* (to a certain degree) entailing *not bumpy* (to a corresponding degree) and *vice versa*—shows how delicate the issue of the absoluteness of comparatives is. See Peter Unger *Ignorance* [ref.]

organism, is not to be identified with its constituents at some time-slice of its career, but with the process by which those elements fall away and are replaced.

Anything intelligible as a *truth*-process, as a *cognitive* process, or process of *knowing* (not now to be identified with *Verstand*'s conception of the settled achievement of truth or knowledge) must show itself to be responsive to how things objectively are. The process of experience is so responsive, since knowers engaged in it respond to the acknowledgment of error—finding themselves with incompatible commitments—by readjusting and repairing the discordant concepts that led to the contradiction of inferentially derived commitments carrying the authority of mediation by non-inferentially acquired commitments carrying the authority of immediacy, in such a way as to eliminate or avoid the incompatibility. Individual commitments count as being “judged in the court of this movement” of experience, as capturing or not capturing how things objectively are. “Common understanding, too, is a becoming, and as this becoming, it is reasonableness.”¹³⁷

Further, to qualify as cognitive, as a practice of knowing, as truth-revealing or truth-expressing, such a *process* must also show itself to be a *progress*. The responsiveness to the immediate being of things must not be random, desultory, or circular, but *cumulatively* revelatory. However meandering the progress might be, some improving grip on how things are must be visible as gradually emerging. How this dimension of normative assessment of experience is to be understood is a long story, and I am obliged to be ruthlessly short with it here. For Hegel the *expressive progressiveness* of the process of experience is something that in principle is only visible *retrospectively*. The process must be *recollected* (by a ‘Wiederholung’),

¹³⁷ [PG M55].

that is rationally reconstructed *as* the progressive revelation—the making explicit—of conceptual contents that then appear as having been all along implicitly in play. A paradigmatic case is where some concept-constitutive inference—say, “If I strike this dry, well-made match, it will probably light,” which might be partially constitutive of well-made as applied in this context—was modally robust under a relatively restricted range of circumstances, and then is updated by having one of the (what then becomes retrospectively visible as) implicit restrictions made explicit in the form of a collateral premise in a successor inference (and hence concept): “If I strike this dry, well-made match in the absence of a strong magnetic field, it will probably light.” Since this inference remains good under a wider range of counterfactual situations (i.e. when conjoined with a wider range of collateral premises, true or false), it better expresses what objectively follows from what, and the concepts that it in part articulates are more correct than their predecessors.¹³⁸

From such a retrospective, recollective, rationally reconstructive point of view, a process of experience that shows up as expressively progressive is at the same time one in which the contents of the concepts developing in it are *determined*, i.e. become *more determinate*. Once again, this comparative is not to be understood as admitting an absolute reading, so not as paraphrasable as “more nearly perfectly (fully, unimprovably, unrevisably) determinate.” For that absolute notion of determinateness is an illusion characteristic of the defective

¹³⁸ As we saw in Part Two, Hegel’s most helpful discussion of this sort of retrospective constitution of an expressively progressive trajectory through a tradition is in the closing paragraphs of the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology*, where he talks about the emergence in experience of a “second, new, true object” from a first object that then shows up as having been a mere appearance of the second. It is in terms of this process that we are to understand how a distinction between noumena and phenomena can arise *within* a sequence of phenomena, and how the concept of referents or representeds, what we are talking or thinking *about*, can arise from a sequence of senses or (what then show up as) representings, what we are saying or thinking (as it turns out, about them). Laying out a reading of those dark but pregnant passages along these lines is a task that must await another occasion, however.

metacategories of *Verstand*. More and more of how the world objectively is (what really follows from what, what properties or claims are really incompatible), constraining the process of experience through the deliverances of sensuous immediacy (i.e. non-inferentially acquired judgments), is incorporated at each stage into the mediated (that is, articulated by inferential and incompatibility relations) contents of empirical concepts. The philosophical standpoint of *Vernunft* seeks to do all of the philosophical work for which *Verstand* called on a notion of a once-and-for-all achievable *property of determinateness* of empirical conceptual content—at least all of that philosophical work that is valuable and worth doing—by appealing instead to the concept of a *process* of empirical *determining* of conceptual content that is comparatively assessable—in a move formally parallel to that we have already seen enacted for the concept of truth. On this view, determinateness—like truth and knowledge of how things objectively are—is a concept with real and important application; the kind of normative assessment it codifies is not dissolved in a corrosive anything-goes skeptical soup. (Hegel’s image is “the night in which all cows are black.”) But it has become a diachronic, functional concept, applicable only in virtue of the role a concept plays in an expressively progressive tradition: the way it develops, in concert with its fellows, through experience. This is a temporal, or better, *historical* semantic functionalism (and therefore, a kind of holism), in addition to the *inferential* semantic functionalism (and therefore holism), we have already considered.¹³⁹

VIII. Erinnerung: Vernunft’s Epistemology of Semantics

That, in very broad terms, is how I think Hegel avoids having his strong semantic pessimism collapse into skepticism. Before leaving the discussion of Hegel’s view of the proper

¹³⁹ A fuller discussion of this issue can be found in Chapter Eight.

way to understand the nature and functioning of ordinary empirical concepts (including those of the natural sciences), I want to extract one more important consequence from his approach. As indicated in Section III above, Hegel thinks that his *Vernunft* account of the *metaphysics* of semantics has important consequences for the *epistemology* of semantics—that is, for how we think about what it is to *grasp*, *convey*, or *communicate* conceptual contents. The two orthogonal dimensions of Hegel’s semantic holism—the inferential and the historical—together put severe constraints on how we can think about those issues.

For conceptual contents as Hegel conceives them cannot be specified or conveyed by *definitions* of the sort Kant deploys throughout his work: verbal formulations distinguishing the concept from all others by a set of necessary and sufficient marks.¹⁴⁰ As a rough example for a substantive concept, he offers a definition of virtue: a readiness in lawful actions that are done freely, combined with moral strength in pursuit of these with struggle against obstacles.¹⁴¹ The trouble with these from the point of view of the Hegelian semantics is that they purport to fix the content of one concept by appealing to other concepts—those articulating the constituent marks—that must be supposed to have achieved full and final determinateness, fixing *their* boundaries once and for all. And that picture, characteristic of the metaconception of concepts of *Verstand*, is just what the metaconception of *Vernunft* assures us we cannot have. Nor could one insist that at least the *relation* between, say, virtue and the mark of struggle against obstacles might be constant, even as the contents of those concepts evolved through a course of experience. For such counterfactual-supporting inferential relations must themselves

¹⁴⁰ This definition of definition is offered in each of the versions of his *Logic* that we have. See for instance the Dohna-Wundlacken *Logic*, p. 489 in Kant’s *Lectures on Logic* J. Michael Young (ed., trans.), [Cambridge U. Press 1992].

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* pp. 464-465.

be constantly assessed as candidates for possible revision in response to recalcitrant experience, along with all the rest. (Would any and every possible ground for relinquishing the mark of struggle against obstacles really just be warranting a change of subject from that of virtue?) This is, once again, a Quinean point: once they have served their purpose of introducing a concept, definitions take their place alongside other judgments in which it is applied, with at best a presumption against revision that remains defeasible and refutable. Nor is it any help for this difficulty to retreat from Kantian-Leibnizian *definitions* to what Kant calls ‘descriptions’: more subjective, purpose-relative specifications of a concept that hope to convey the content to another by offering marks that are neither necessary nor sufficient, but only suggestively associated.¹⁴² The troubles with the marks themselves, and with their association with the concept being explained, remain. For the root of the difficulty is the conception of what is conveyed: something that *has* complete, precise, distinguishing marks.¹⁴³

So if these sorts of tellings won’t do, how *are* conceptual contents to be understood, specified, and conveyed? Does the metaconceptual perspective of *Vernunft* condemn us to some sort of mere *showing* of what cannot be *said*? Not at all. *Vernunft*’s distinctive form of content-delimiting saying is an *Erinnerung*: a rationally reconstructed genealogy, which exhibits the current functional role played by the concept in a larger cognitive constellation articulated by relations of material incompatibility and material inference as the outcome of an expressively progressive process of development. Typically, this is a matter of tracing a carefully selected trajectory through the actual history of the concept, by selecting index episodes of experientially-driven revision and refinement of the concept, each of which reveals—from the viewpoint of the

¹⁴² E.g. at p. 491, *ibid.*

¹⁴³ Cf. p. 489, *ibid.*

so-far-finally achieved conception, some important aspect of conceptual content being conveyed. Where the actual history is too confused, incoherent, or fitful, where too many steps are retraced, lessons lost, or blind alleys over-thoroughly explored, however, a cleaner, clearer path may be indicated, whereby the actual content *could* have developed, though in fact things didn't happen that way. Hegel's own accounts of the contents of substantive concepts, in the *Realphilosophie*, take the shape of one of these two species of rationally reconstructed recollection.

As examples, one might think of the narrative whose eventually revealed hero is the concept of animal organism in the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Nature* (or the related discussion of the organic in the *Observing Reason* section of the *Phenomenology*), the presentation of memory in the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Mind*, the treatment of the sublime in the first volume of the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, or of the epic in the second volume, or of the religion of beauty in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, or the genealogical explanation of the concepts of property and contract in the *Philosophy of Right*.

For Hegel, I have claimed, the determinate content of ordinary, ground-level, empirical concepts, including those of the natural sciences, consist in the relations of material incompatibility and material consequence they stand in to other such concepts, and to a set of judgments that are endorsed applications of them, on the one hand, and the functional role they play in a progressive, expressive-developmental sequence or tradition of such constellations of claims-and-concepts, both earlier and later, on the other. If that account of the nature of determinate conceptual content is correct, then the *only* way to grasp, specify, or communicate such contents is by placing them in such a synchronic and diachronic context. Insofar as the

whole is only sketched, the conceptual content of the functional component in question will be only approximately delimited.

IX. Logical Concepts Compared to Empirical Ones, Metaphysically and Epistemologically: a Difference and a Similarity

I have gone on at some length about how I see Hegel thinking about ground-level empirical concepts both because this is the semantic issue about which I think he has the most to teach us today and because these views are much less familiar and less discussed, and the attribution of them is accordingly bound to be more controversial, than is the case for his treatments of logical concepts. But the larger point was to motivate a particular program for a critical reading of Hegel by comparing and contrasting his views about ordinary empirical concepts with his views about his own philosophical and logical ones. As I indicated above, I take it that Hegel's distinctively philosophical, logical, or speculative (a translation common in English versions of Hegel for his "begriffende") concepts—including the "form determinations of the Concept" with which the *Science of Logic* is principally concerned—have a characteristic expressive role that is quite different from that of ordinary, nonphilosophical concepts. Their job is not to make explicit how the *world* is (to subserve a function of consciousness) but rather to make explicit the *process* of making explicit how the world is (to enable and embody a kind of *self*-consciousness). If I am right in attributing to Hegel the constellation of views about the metaphysics and epistemology of the semantics of determinate concepts I sketched in the body of this paper—strong semantic pessimism as the expression of a construal of empirical inexhaustibility as necessary conceptual instability, and recollection as the only adequate form of

specification of the contents of determinate concepts, respectively—then perhaps one reason these views have not been much remarked on by Hegel’s readers is that what he actually talks about in his official systematic works, the *Science of Logic* and the *Phenomenology of Mind*, is exclusively his distinctive *philosophical* concepts. Furthermore, Hegel’s views about the contents of concepts at one level cannot straightforwardly be carried over to the concepts proper to the other level.

Specifically, I think that Hegel thinks that logical concepts are different from ground-level concepts in one important respect, and like them in another. They are *unlike* determinate empirical concepts in that Hegel thinks that there *can*, indeed *must* be a final, fully expressively adequate set of logical concepts, whose application in practice will never oblige their users to revise or relinquish them. He is a strong semantic *optimist* about logical concepts. Indeed, he thinks that in his *Logic*, he has presented such a system of logical concepts. What his logical concepts are adequate *for* is just making explicit the process by which determinate content is conferred on or incorporated in the ground-level empirical and practical concepts that articulate our consciousness of how things are: the process of determining conceptual content through experience. Being able to deploy those logical, so metaconceptual, expressive resources Hegel has developed out of the raw materials he inherited from the philosophical tradition is achieving a certain kind of semantic self-consciousness. It exercising a capacity, engendered by the use of his logical vocabulary, to *say* and *think* explicitly what one has all along implicitly been *doing* in saying and thinking anything at all—namely, determining content, incorporating immediacy in the form of mediation, by engaging in a process of concept-revision through experience. This is the sort of self-consciousness Hegel calls “Absolute Knowing.”

As I indicated above, I think there is no reason whatsoever to think that Hegel ever believed that the achievement of the sort of self-consciousness about that process of experience made possible by his logical and systematic philosophical vocabulary—that is, attaining Absolute Knowledge—meant that empirical inquiry, discovery, and theorizing would come to an end. On the contrary. Although being able to bring out into the self-conscious light of day what one had previously been obliged to do in the dark may transform empirical inquiry in various ways, it does not bring to an end the enterprise of grooming and transforming our claims-and-concepts in the light of the deliverances of sensuous immediacy.

Erfahrung—the revelation of what one had taken to be true as *mere* appearance—is the passing away that does not itself pass away. Any impression to the contrary is the result of confusing the two levels of concepts. For the *logical* enterprise of crafting expressive resources sufficient to make explicit the crucial features of the empirical enterprise *can, must*, and Hegel thinks, essentially *has* come to an end with a fully and finally adequate system of concepts: with what for that reason should not be called ‘*his*’ logic or philosophical system, but simply ‘*the*’ logic or system.

So Hegel thinks that empirical and logical concepts are as different as they could be with respect to the possibility of achieving a final, unrevisable, fully adequate system of them. That is *not* in principle possible for empirical concepts, but *is* possible both in principle and in practice, for logical or philosophical concepts. But there is another respect in which Hegel’s practice shows us he believes logical concepts *are* like empirical ones. It concerns not the metaphysics of

their content, but its epistemology. For Hegel clearly takes it that the *only* way it is possible, in principle, to understand, specify, or convey logical or philosophical concepts is by rational reconstruction of an expressively progressive tradition of which they are the product. Both of the works in which he presents his systematic thought—the only two books he published during his lifetime—have this form. They are semantic genealogies of speculative logical concepts.

Thus in the *Phenomenology* he selects from the actual history of the development of philosophical concepts a sequence of transformations each of which can be seen, retrospectively, as conceptually epoch-making, and as cumulatively determining and revealing to us the systematic idiom—the constellation of philosophical claims-and-concepts—whose use *is* the final form of semantic self-consciousness he calls “Absolute Knowing.” In the *Logic*, what is essentially the same system¹⁴⁴ is presented as the culmination of a course of development that begins with the very simplest form-determinations of concepts—metaconcepts codifying a semantic self-consciousness so rudimentary that without it no concept-use at all is intelligible at the ground level—and progresses in a trajectory that does not at all pretend to track or be drawn from the empirical-historical tradition of thought by which the systematic concepts actually developed.

The *Erinnerung* presented in the *Logic* is substantially more retrospectively reconstructed, and hence more rational in the sense of more reason-revealing, than is that of the *Phenomenology*. But for both, Hegel clearly believes that the *only* way to come to occupy the cognitive position he finally arrives at is by going through the conceptual process and progress to

¹⁴⁴ So I claim; of course this is controversial.

which the long expositions of those works are guides. It is no use jumping ahead to peek at the ending and see how the books come out.

It should be remarked also, by way of qualification of the claim to discern a similarity in the treatment of logical and empirical concepts, that even along the dimension of the epistemology of their semantics, the similarity cannot be taken to be an identity. For the process recollected in the case of the logical concepts is *not* (in either of its versions) one of *determination by incorporation of immediacy*, as it is in the case of empirical concepts. In the logical case the transformative Erfahrung that is rehearsed in the two books is rather motivated wholly by considerations that show up retrospectively as having always already been implicit in the contents of the (meta)concepts already in play.

X. Conclusion: Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel

I want to conclude by sketching my program for a critical reading of these Hegelian theses. I take it that reading a text for its conceptual content is exploring the inferential roles of its claims: determining what one would be committing oneself to by undertaking such claims, and what might entitle one to such commitments, what would be evidence for and against them, and what they would be evidence for or against. The inferences in question are typically (sometimes, massively) multipremise inferences. That means that for each claim one has identified as central or fundamental, there is a choice possible as to the source from which one draws the auxiliary hypotheses, with which it is to be conjoined in determining its inferential role. A close or *de dicto* reading (what in jurisprudence is called a “black letter” interpretation),

restricts the available collateral premises to other claims made in the text (or corpus) in question. A critical or *de re* reading, however, finds its auxiliary hypotheses, not in claims attributed to the author being read, but rather in those endorsed by the one doing the reading—not from what else the author *takes* to be true, but from what *is* true, according to the reader. The result is an assessment of what *really* follows from and would be evidence for the claims in question, whatever the author may have thought. I don't think that one or the other of these ways of approaching a text, for instance, a philosophical one, is "better" than the other. Each offers a legitimate perspectives on the conceptual content, that is, the inferential role, of the claims made in a text, and each provides a distinctive sort of illumination of the text it addresses. So long as it is clear which set of rules one is binding oneself by, neither enterprise should be thought objectionable in principle. Such, at any rate, is the hermeneutic methodology my inferentialist semantics underwrites.¹⁴⁵

The program I am sketching aims at a critical reading. I have now put myself in a position to say rather economically what I propose to keep and what I propose to emend in Hegel's philosophy. The results of my (very selectively focused) exercise in comparing and contrasting Hegel's views about empirical and logical concepts can be formulated in two claims:

1. Hegel thinks logical concepts are *different* from empirical concepts in that because of the difference between their characteristic expressive tasks, while there can for reasons of deep principle be no final, stable, expressively complete set of *empirical* concepts, there *is* a final, stable, expressively complete set of *logical* concepts.

¹⁴⁵ I discuss this connection between hermeneutics and inferentialist semantics in greater detail in Chapter Three of *Tales of the Mighty Dead*.

2. Hegel thinks that logical concepts are *like* empirical concepts in that in spite of the difference between their characteristic expressive tasks, the only way in principle to understand, specify, or convey the contents of both sorts of concepts is by a rational reconstruction of a history of their *development*.

The underlying claims about the nature of empirical concepts seem to me to be among the most interesting and promising of Hegel's conceptual innovations in semantics. And I also endorse what I understand to be his approach to the quite different expressive role distinctive of logical or philosophical concepts—the one epitomized in the slogan (my words, not his): “Logic is the organ of semantic self-consciousness.” But I think Hegel is wrong in *both* of these claims about the differences and similarities between empirical and logical concepts.

I think he is wrong to think that we can ever finish the task of producing expressive tools to make explicit what is implicit in the process of determining empirical conceptual content. He is certainly wrong to think that he has already given us a complete set of inference-codifying concepts. The discussion of the forms of the syllogism in terms of his logical concepts of particularity, universality, and individuality in the *Science of Logic* is a *tour de force* of theoretical craftsmanship and beauty. But we now know, as he could not, that it does not and could not capture even the simplest forms of inference involving iterated quantifiers, which are essential for forming the most basic mathematical concepts. But I also think he is wrong even to think that we *could*, in principle, even if not in practice, finish the expressive task to which logical vocabulary is addressed. The simplest inference-codifying locutions are conditionals, which let one *say* explicitly *that* some inference or inferential pattern is a good one. But we assess the goodness of inferences along many semantically relevant dimensions, and different

conditionals are needed to capture each. Thus asserting the two-valued (so-called “material”) conditional is explicitly saying that it is good in the sense that it will not lead from a true premise to a false conclusion. Asserting an intuitionistic conditional is explicitly saying that it is good in the sense that there is a recipe for turning a proof of the premises into a proof of the conclusion. And so on, for the conditionals of strict implication, relevant implication, entailment, quantum logic, and so on. I don’t know how to make sense of the idea of a *complete* set of semantically relevant dimensions of appraisal of inferences, and hence of conditionals codifying them. Here I am inclined rather to a sort of metalevel *logical* inexhaustibility claim: there will always be further aspects of the process of (further) determining the contents of empirical concepts by incorporating immediacy in mediated form.¹⁴⁶

As to the second claim, even if the only way to grasp, specify, or convey empirical concepts is by *Erinnerung*, by an exercise in semantic genealogy, it at least does not *follow* that that is so also for logical concepts. And it seems to me that it is not so. The semantic expressive role distinctive of logical vocabulary gives us another way of understanding and conveying them. For we can start with a *pragmatic* metalanguage, in which we describe the practices that confer and determine conceptual content, and specify in those terms what it is that a particular logical locution makes explicit, introducing it as expressing *those* features. This is, not by coincidence, the path I pursue in *Making It Explicit*. I think it *is* possible in principle to say how we should think about discursive practice according to the conceptual scheme in place at the end of the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic*, *without* having to rehearse the expository paths by which Hegel develops that scheme for us.

¹⁴⁶ Notice that to say this is not to say that there is anything about that process that in principle cannot be made explicit, but rather that for any particular set of logical expressive resources, there will always be something still left unsaid: a claim of the form $\forall\exists\sim$, not $\exists\forall\sim$.

Of course, a *lot* of work would have to be done to make out these last claims of mine. After all, the very best way to show it is possible to make non-genealogical sense of Hegel's enterprise is just to do it. It will no doubt be a relief to know that I don't propose to launch into that project here. But it should at this point be pretty clear how I propose to carve off some bits of the Hegelian enterprise as worthy of being pursued in contemporary terms, while discarding others as inessential—what I consider living and what dead in Hegel's understanding of conceptual content.

Chapter Eight

Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms

This chapter could equally well have been titled 'Some Idealist Themes in Hegel's Pragmatism'. Both *idealism* and *pragmatism* are capacious concepts, encompassing many distinguishable theses. I will focus on one pragmatist thesis and one idealist thesis (though we will come within sight of some others). The pragmatist thesis (what I will call 'the *semantic* pragmatist thesis') is that the *use* of concepts determines their *content*, that is, that concepts can have no content apart from that conferred on them by their use. The idealist thesis is that the structure and unity of the *concept* is the same as the structure and unity of the *self*. The semantic pragmatist thesis is a commonplace of our Wittgensteinean philosophical world. The idealist thesis is, to say the least, *not*. I don't believe there is any serious contemporary semantic thinker who is pursuing the thought that *concepts* might best be understood by modeling them on *selves*. Indeed, from the point of view of contemporary semantics it is hard to know even what one could *mean* by such a thought what relatively unproblematic features of selves are supposed to illuminate what relatively problematic features of concepts? Why should we think that understanding something about, say, personal identity would help us understand issues

concerning the identity and individuation of concepts? From a contemporary point of view, the idealist semantic thesis is bound to appear initially as something between unpromising and crazy. My *interpretive* claim here will be that the idealist thesis is Hegel's way of making the pragmatist thesis workable, in the context of several other commitments and insights. My *philosophical* claim here will be that we actually have a lot to learn from this strategy about contemporary semantic issues that we by no means see our way to the bottom of otherwise. In the space of this chapter, I cannot properly justify the first claim textually, nor the second argumentatively. I will confine myself of necessity to sketching the outlines and motivations for the complex, sophisticated, and interesting view on the topic I find Hegel putting forward.

I

The topic to which that view is addressed is the nature and origins of the *determinate contents of empirical conceptual norms*. Of course Hegel talks about *lots* of other things. This is merely the strand in his thought I'm going to pursue here. But it may seem perverse to identify this as so much as *one* of Hegel's concerns. After all, what he spends most of his pages talking about (in both of the books he published during his lifetime, the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic*) is the *pure, logical, or formal* concepts (the pure form-determinations of the Concept), that are the successors in his scheme to Kant's categories: concepts such as *particularity*, *universality*, and *individuality* and the distinction between what things are *in* themselves and what they are *for* consciousness or for another. But one of the overarching methodological commitments that guides my reading of Hegel is that the *point* of developing an adequate understanding of these categorical concepts is so that they can then be used to make explicit how ordinary empirical concepts work. I would say the same thing about Kant. And I think that one of the things that makes these philosophers hard to understand is that they devote relatively too

much time to developing and motivating their (in the transcendental sense) logical apparatus, and relatively too little time to applying it to the use of ground-level concepts. In both cases I think one does well to keep one's eye at all times on the significance of what is being said about pure concepts for our understanding of the use of ordinary empirical concepts. Again, Hegel's idealist thesis is directed in the first instance towards what he calls *the* Concept: the holistic inferential system of determinate concepts and commitments articulated by means of those concepts. But we will see that the abstract structural claim embodied in the idealist thesis holds of both the system and its elements—and holds of the elements in part *because* it holds of the system, and vice versa.

As I read him, Hegel thinks that Kant has been insufficiently critical regarding two important, intimately related issues. First, he has not inquired deeply enough into the conditions of the possibility of the *determinateness* of the rules that specify the contents of ordinary empirical concepts. Second, Kant is virtually silent on the issue of their *origins*. He has not presented a developed account of how those determinate empirical concepts become available to knowers and agents in the first place. Kant takes over from Leibniz the rationalist understanding of knowledge and action as consisting in the application of concepts. Awareness, Leibniz's 'apperception', whether theoretical or practical, consists in classifying particulars by universals—that is, for Kant, bringing them under *rules*.

Hegel inherits from Kant a fundamental philosophical commitment (I'm prepared to say 'insight'): a commitment to the *normative* character of concepts. One of Kant's most basic and important ideas is that what distinguishes judgements and actions from the responses of merely

natural creatures is that they are things we are in a distinctive way *responsible* for. They are undertakings of *commitments* that are subject to a certain kind of normative assessment, as correct or incorrect. The norms¹⁴⁷ that determine what counts as correct or incorrect, he calls ‘concepts’. So the genus of which both judgement and action are species is understood as the activity of *applying concepts*: producing acts the correctness or incorrectness of which is determined by the rule or norm by which one has implicitly bound oneself in performing that act. By taking this line, Kant initiates a shift in attention from *ontological* questions (understanding the difference between two sorts of fact: physical facts and mental facts) to *deontological* ones (understanding the difference between facts and norms, or between description and prescription). This move entailed a corresponding shift from Cartesian certainty to Kantian necessity. This is the shift from concern with our grip on a concept (is it clear? is it distinct?) to concern with its grip on us (is it valid? is it binding?). (‘Necessary’ for Kant just means ‘according to a rule’.) The urgent task becomes understanding how it is possible for us to *commit* ourselves, to make ourselves *responsible* to a norm that settles the correctness of what we do.¹⁴⁸ The problem of understanding the nature and conditions of the possibility (in the sense of intelligibility) of *conceptual normativity* moves to centre stage. (This view about the nature of the practice of using concepts might be called ‘*normative pragmatism*’.)

¹⁴⁷ Kant usually says ‘rules’ but he means something that, though statable, can be implicit, not just what is already explicitly stated.

¹⁴⁸ To be able to do that is to be *free*. To be free is accordingly to be able to bind oneself by the norms that are concepts. The *only* thing that Kantian agents can *do*, in the strict sense of *do* that involves the exercise of freedom, is apply concepts -- whether theoretically in judgement, or practically in action. Activity that consists in the application of concepts is *rational* activity. So we are free exactly in so far as we are rational.

Kant tells us rather a lot about the process of applying concepts in ordinary judgements and actions. And I take it that his account of the origin, nature, and functioning of the pure concepts of the understanding, whose applicability is implicit in the use of any empirical concept, is intended to serve as a transcendental explanation of the background conditions with respect to which alone normativity in general is intelligible. But he says very little about how knowers and agents should be understood as getting access to the determinate empirical concepts they deploy. What he does say is largely programmatic and architectonic. It is clear, however, that one important structural dimension distinguishing Kant's from Hegel's account of conceptual norms concerns the relation between their production and their consumption, that is, between the process by which they become available to a knower and agent, on the one hand, and the practice of using them, on the other. For Kant tells a *two-phase* story, according to which one sort of activity *institutes* conceptual norms, and then another sort of activity *applies* those concepts.¹⁴⁹ First, a reflective judgement (somehow) makes or finds¹⁵⁰ the determinate rule that articulates an empirical concept. Then, and only then, can that concept be applied in the determinate judgements and maxims that are the ultimate subjects of the first two Critiques.¹⁵¹ Very roughly, Kant sees experience, the application of concepts, as beginning with the *selection* of concepts. The potential knower has available a myriad of different possible determinate rules of synthesis of representations. Experience requires picking one, and trying it out as a rule for

¹⁴⁹ 'Judgment in general is the faculty of thinking the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) be given, the judgment which subsumes the particular under it . . . is *determinate* [bestimmend]. But if only the particular be given for which the universal has to be found, the judgment is merely *reflective*.' Kant 1790 (*Critique of Judgment*, Introduction, Section IV, first paragraph.)

¹⁵⁰ Given Kant's other commitments, neither term can be applied without qualification, which fact sets up the problematic of the third Critique.

¹⁵¹ Only the 'ultimate' subjects, since the role of the pure concepts in making them possible is the proximate subject.

combining the manifold of presented intuitions. If it doesn't quite 'fit', or permits the synthesis only of some of the intuitions that present themselves, then a mistake has been made, and a related, overlapping, but different determinate concept is tried in its place. Thus, although it is up to the knower what concept to try out, the *success* of the attempted synthesis according to that rule is not up to the knower. The exercise of spontaneity is constrained by the deliverances of receptivity.¹⁵²

The workability of a story along these lines depends on its being settled somehow, for each rule of synthesis and each possible manifold of representations, whether that manifold can be synthesized successfully according to that rule. This might be called the condition of *complete* or *maximal determinateness* of concepts. Only if this condition obtains -only if the empirical concepts made available by judgements of reflection are *fully* and *finally* determinate—does the Kantian account make intelligible the application of concepts as being *constrained* by the deliverances of sense, the correctness of judgements as constrained by the particulars to which we try to apply the universals that are our determinate empirical concepts. Hegel wants us to investigate critically the transcendental conditions of the possibility of such determinateness of concepts. He does not find in Kant a satisfactory account of *this* crucial condition of the possibility of experience.¹⁵³ The question is how we can understand the

¹⁵² I'll indicate briefly below how Hegel sees immediacy as exercising an authority that constrains the application of concepts, and so how particulars are given a normatively significant voice that must negotiate with the reciprocal authority of mediating universals, all of it administered by those who attribute determinately contentful conceptual commitments.

¹⁵³ It should be noticed in this connection that invoking the temporal *schematism* of concepts is not a responsive answer to this challenge (quite apart from the obscurity of the details). For the schematism of the understanding at most explains how a concept could get a grip on (apply or not apply to) a particular intuition. But the question regarding determinateness is rather what it is

possibility of applying, endorsing, committing ourselves to, or binding ourselves by one completely determinate rule rather than a slightly different one. This problem is related to the one Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein.¹⁵⁴ It is the issue of understanding the conditions of the possibility of the *determinateness* of our conceptual commitments, responsibilities, and obligations. I don't want to dwell on what I take Hegel to see as the shortcomings of Kant's answer. For my purposes it suffices to say that Hegel takes a different approach to understanding the relation between the institution and the application of conceptual norms. In fact I think Hegel's idealism is the core of his response to just this issue, and it is here that I think we have the most to learn from him.¹⁵⁵

A good way of understanding the general outlines of Hegel's account of the relation between the activity of instituting conceptual norms and the activity of applying them is to compare it with a later movement of thought that is structurally similar in important ways. Carnap and the other logical positivists affirmed their neo-Kantian roots by taking over Kant's two-phase structure: *first* one stipulates *meanings*, *then* experience dictates which deployments

for us to get a hold of one completely determinate universal rather than a closely related one that applies to almost, but not quite all the same particulars.

¹⁵⁴ Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). Only 'related to' because Kripke imports constraints on the problem that Hegel would not share. It is fair to ask what it is about how we have *act/ally* applied concepts in the past that determines how we *ought* to apply them in the future, what determines how we have *committed* ourselves to do so. For to ask that is to ask how the actual practice of *application* manages to *institute* one norm rather than another. But there is no legitimate standpoint from which one is entitled to restrict one's specification of that practice of application, as Kripke implicitly does, to what can be stated in a *nonnormative* vocabulary. Using an expression *correctly* or *incorrectly* is also something we *actually* do.

¹⁵⁵ The origins of this way of thinking about Hegel's problems lie in Robert Pippin's pathbreaking work, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989).

of them yield true *theories*.¹⁵⁶ The first activity is prior to and independent of experience; the second is constrained by and dependent on it. Choosing one's meanings is not empirically constrained in the way that deciding what sentences with those meanings to endorse or believe is. Quine rejects Carnap's sharp separation of the process of deciding what concepts (meanings, language) to use from the process of deciding what judgements (beliefs, theory) to endorse. For him, it is a fantasy to see meanings as freely fixed independently and in advance of our applying those meanings in forming fallible beliefs that answer for their correctness to how things are. Changing our beliefs can change our meanings. There is only one practice -the practice of actually making determinate judgements. Engaging in that practice involves settling at once both what we mean and what we believe. Quine's *pragmatism* consists in his development of this *monistic* account in contrast to Carnap's two-phase account. The practice of using language must be intelligible as not only the *application* of concepts by using linguistic expressions, but equally and at the same time as the *institution* of the conceptual norms that determine what would count as correct and incorrect uses of linguistic expressions. The actual *use* of the language settles -and is all that *could* settle -the *meanings* of the expressions used.¹⁵⁷

Hegel is a pragmatist also in this monistic sense. He aims at a conception of experience that does not distinguish two different kinds of activity, one of which is the application of concepts in (determinate) judgement and action, and the other of which is the institution or discovery of

¹⁵⁶ Among the many nontrivial differences between them is that Carnap's is a *globally* two-phase picture, while Kant's is only *locally* two-phase. That is, nothing in Kant's account suggests the possibility of making *all* one's reflective judgements first, only then to begin making determinant judgements. The structural similarity consists only in the common commitment to there being two quite different sorts of things one is doing, in making meanings or concepts available, and then in employing them.

¹⁵⁷ Notice that this is not yet to say anything about the vocabulary in which the use is to be specified by the theorist. In particular, focusing on *use* is not the same thing as focusing on *use specified in a non-normative vocabulary*.

those concepts (by ‘judgements of reflection’). For Hegel, empirical judgement and action is not (as for Kant and Carnap) just the *selection* of concepts to apply, or the replacement of one fully formed concept by another. It is equally the *alteration* and *development* of the content of those concepts. Conceptual content arises out of the process of applying concepts—the *determinate* content of concepts is unintelligible apart from the *determination* of that content, the process of determining it. Concepts are not fixed or static items. Their content is altered by every particular case in which they are applied or not applied in experience. At every stage, experience does presuppose the prior availability of concepts to be applied in judgement, and at every stage the content of those concepts derives from their role in experience.¹⁵⁸

Hegel often couches this point in terms of a distinction between two metaconcepts of the conceptual: Reason (his good, dynamic, active, living conception), and Understanding (Kant’s, and everyone else’s, bad, static, inert, dead conception). Understanding concepts in terms of the categories of the Understanding is treating them as fixed and static. It allows progress only in the sorting of *judgements* into true and false, that is, in the *selection* from a repertoire fixed in advance of the correct concepts to apply in a particular instance. But Hegel wants to insist that if one ignores the process by which concepts *develop*—what other concepts they develop out of, and the forces implicit in them, in concert with their fellows, that lead to their alteration (what

¹⁵⁸ So one of Hegel’s fundamental claims is that a suitable *dynamic* account of the relation between conceptual contents and experience, the institution of concepts and their application, can reconcile the rationalist insight and the empiricist insight (that the content of empirical concepts must be understood as deriving from experience), while rejecting both innateness and abstractionism. This *pragmatist* strategy looks to the *development* of concepts through their use in experience, that is, in the practices of judging and acting.

Hegel will call their ‘negativity’)—then the sort of content they have is bound to remain unintelligible.¹⁵⁹

II

My principal aim in this chapter is to show how the idealist thesis that I put on the table at the outset contributes to the working out of Hegel’s pragmatist strategy for understanding the nature and origins of the determinateness of the content of empirical concepts. That idealist thesis, recall, is the claim that the structure and unity of the concept is the same as the structure and unity of the self-conscious self. Some of the clearest statements of this central Hegelian thought are in the *Science of Logic*:

It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature of the *Notion* [Begriff] is

¹⁵⁹ Recognizing that every concept actually applied in any empirical judgement is only a more or less adequate expression of the implicit articulation of things entails acknowledging that no determinate judgement ought to be taken to be unqualifiedly true. (For Hegel, it is different with the concepts of logic, whose distinctive expressive task it is to make explicit the process by which the system of determinate concepts and judgements the Concept -progresses and develops.) So to take the judgement to be the unit of cognition (as Kant does, because it is the minimal unit of cognitive *responsibility*) is already to commit oneself to an unsustainable view of the nature of the determinateness of conceptual content.

recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as unity of the I *think*, or of self-consciousness . . .¹⁶⁰

Thus we are justified by a cardinal principle of the Kantian philosophy in referring to the nature of the I in order to learn what the *Notion* is. But conversely, it is necessary for this purpose to have grasped the *Notion* of the I . . .¹⁶¹

What I want to do next is to sketch Hegel's notion of the structure and unity characteristic of self-conscious selves—the fixed end of the idealist analogy by means of which we are to come to understand the structure and unity of concepts, including the Concept (which is what this passage officially addresses).

Hegel takes over Kant's fundamental idea that to call something a self, to treat it as an 'I', is to take up an essentially *normative* attitude toward it. It is to treat it as the subject of *commitments*, as something that can be *responsible*—hence as a potential knower and agent. The question then is how to understand the nature of the normative attitudes and statuses that distinguish being a *who* from being a *what*. One of Hegel's most basic ideas is that normative statuses such as being committed and being responsible—and so knowledge and agency—must be understood as *social* achievements. Normative statuses are a kind of social status. Kant thought normativity could be made intelligible only by appeal to something beyond or behind our empirical activity. For Hegel all transcendental constitution is social institution.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Hegel, G.W.F., *Hegel's Science of Logic*, translated by A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press International, 1969). Hereafter *SL*. P.584.

¹⁶¹ *SL* p. 585.

¹⁶² The phrase is from John Haugeland, 'Heidegger on Being a Person: in *Nous* 16, 1982. Of course, the social institution is not unconstrained. As we will see, the history of previous applications of a concept, including those immediately elicited by the particulars to which they are applied, exercises a crucial authority over such an institution.

The practical attitude of taking or treating something as able to undertake commitments and be responsible for its doings—in the sense articulated by *concepts*, that is the sense in which at least part of what one is committed to or responsible for is being able to give *reasons*—Hegel calls ‘recognition’ [Anerkennung]. The core idea structuring Hegel’s social understanding of selves is that they are synthesized by *mutual recognition*. That is, to be a self—a locus of conceptual commitment and responsibility—is to be taken or treated as one by those one takes or treats as one: to be recognized by those one recognizes. Merely *biological* beings, subjects and objects of desires, become *spiritual* beings, undertakers (and attributors) of commitments, by being at once the subjects and the objects of recognitive attitudes. At the same time and by the same means that *selves*, in this normative sense, are synthesized, so are *communities*, as structured wholes of selves all of whom recognize and are recognized by each other.¹⁶³ Both selves and communities are normative structures instituted by reciprocal recognition.

This is a *social* theory of selves in the sense that selves and communities are products of the same process, aspects of the same structure. But it is a social theory in a stronger sense as well. For being a self in this sense is not something one can achieve all on one’s own. Only part of what is needed is within the power of the candidate self. It is up to the individual who to recognize. But it is not up to the individual whether those individuals then in turn recognize the original recognizer. Only when this ‘movement’ is completed is a self constituted. I think the structure is clearest when one considers *specific* recognition—that is, attribution of some specific normative status, not just treating someone as having some normative status or other (as the subject of some responsibilities, or entitlements, commitments, or authority, which is recognition

¹⁶³ For Hegel, true general recognition is an equivalence relation: symmetric, reflexive, and transitive. See Chapter Two and Chapter Ten.

in general). For instance, it is up to me whom I recognize as a good chess player. I can settle for recognizing any old wood pusher who can play a legal game, or I can set my standards so high that only Grand Masters qualify. But it is not then up to me (certainly not up to me in the same sense) whether those I recognize as good players recognize me as a good player. If I've set my sights low enough, it will be easy to qualify. But if my aspirations for the sort of self I want to be, and so to be recognized as, are higher, it will be correspondingly more difficult for me to earn the recognition of those I recognize. This account of what it is to be a good chess player, in the various senses that term can take—and more generally, what it is to have some specific normative status—gives the candidate a certain sort of *authority*: the authority to constitute a community by recognizing individuals as members of it. But doing that is also ceding another sort of authority to those one recognizes: the authority to determine whether or not the candidate qualifies as a member of the community so constituted by the standards to which I have subjected myself. Having a normative status in this sense is an essentially social achievement, in which both the individual self and the community must participate. And both the self and the community achieve their status as such only as the result of successful reciprocal recognition.

So when we talk about the structure and unity of the 'I' or of self-conscious *selves* according to Hegel, we are talking about the structure and unity produced by this process of reciprocal recognition, by which normative communities and community members are simultaneously instituted. This is what the idealist thesis proposes to use as a model for understanding the structure and unity of *concepts*. Here is a hint, to be followed up below. In recognizing others, I in effect institute a community—a kind of *universal* common to those others, and if all goes well, to me too. If they recognize me in turn, they constitute me as

something more than just the particular I started out as—a kind of *individual* (self), which is that *particular* (organism) *as* a member of the community, *as* characterized by that universal. The (recognizing) particular accordingly exercises a certain sort of authority over the universal, and the universal then exercises a certain sort of authority over the individual. It is at something like this level of abstraction that we will find a common structure between the social institution of selves and communities by reciprocal recognition, and the relation between concepts, as universals, and the particulars that fall under them, yielding the characterized individuals (particulars *as* falling under universals) that are presented by judgements.

I think we can understand the force of this idealist line of thought by situating it in the tradition of thought about the nature of normativity out of which it grew. Enlightenment conceptions of the normative are distinguished by the essential role they take to be played by normative *attitudes* in instituting normative *statuses*. Commitments and responsibilities are seen as coming into a disenchanted natural world hitherto void of them, as products of human attitudes of acknowledging, endorsing, undertaking, or attributing them. (Hobbes' and Locke's social contract theories of the basis of legitimate political authority are cases in point.) The version of this idea that Kant develops from his reading of Rousseau has it that the distinction between force, coercion, or mere *constraint* on me, on the one hand, and legitimate *authority* over me, on the other, consists in the latter's dependence on my *endorsement* or *acknowledgment* of the authority *as* binding on me. This way of demarcating a kind of normativity might be called the *autonomy thesis*. It is the basis for Kant's distinction between the realm of nature, whose denizens are bound by rules in the form of laws of nature, and the realm of freedom,

whose denizens are bound rather by their *conceptions* of rules—that is, by rules that bind them only in virtue of their own *acknowledgment* of them *as* binding.

In this distinctive sense, rules get their normative force, come to govern our doings, only in virtue of our own attitudes. One is genuinely responsible only for that for which one *takes* responsibility; one is genuinely committed only to that to which one has committed oneself. To be a *self*, a knower and agent, is, according to Kant's original normative insight, to be able to take responsibility for what one does, to be able to undertake or acknowledge commitments. It is to be bound by norms. According to the autonomy thesis, one is in a strict sense bound only by rules or laws one has laid down for oneself, norms one has oneself endorsed. What *makes* them binding is that one *takes* them to be binding. Maintaining such a view is a delicate matter. For a question can arise about how, if I myself am doing the binding *of* myself, what I am doing can count as *binding* myself. If whatever I acknowledge *as* correct—as fulfilling the obligation I have undertaken—is correct, then in what sense is what I did in the first place intelligible as *binding* myself? (Compare Wittgenstein's claim that where whatever *seems* right to me therefore *is* right, there can be no question of right or wrong.) The autonomy thesis says that one only *is* committed to that to which one *has* committed oneself. But this must not be allowed to collapse into the claim that one is committed to exactly whatever one then takes oneself to be committed to, on pain of so emptying the concept of commitment of content as to make it unrecognizable as such. The authority of the self-binder governs the *force* that attaches to a certain rule: it is endorsement by the individual that makes the rule a rule for or binding on that individual. But that authority must not be taken to extend also to the *content* of the rule: to what is and isn't correct according to the rule one has endorsed. For if it does, then one has not by

one's endorsement really *bound* oneself by a rule or norm at all. What is chosen—the rule or law I bind myself to by applying a concept—must have a certain independence of the choosing of it. Only so can we make sense of both sides of the idea of autonomy: of *making* oneself subject to a law by *taking* oneself to be so.¹⁶⁴ Maintaining sufficient distinction between what one *does*, in binding oneself by applying a concept, and the *content* of the commitment so instituted is particularly challenging for any theorist committed to what I've called 'semantic pragmatism'. For that is just the view that it is what one does in applying concepts—undertaking commitments—that determines their content.¹⁶⁵

I hope it is clear that this problem is a version of the question I earlier pictured Hegel as raising about the *determinateness* of the contents of the concepts I apply. If I have available a rule (one of many) with a content that is determinate, in the sense that it is already settled for any particular whether or not the particular falls under it (whether or not applying the concept to it would be *correct*), then I can bind myself by applying the concept. For the concept will then settle what I have obliged myself to do. But Hegel thinks Kant leaves it mysterious how I could have access to concepts, rules, or norms that are determinate in this sense. In effect, Kant just assumes there can be such things. Hegel thinks a rigorously critical thinker should inquire into the conditions of the possibility of such determinateness.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter Two. The discussion of the Law of the Heart in the *Phenomenology* is one place where this issue of the conditions of the possibility of determinately binding oneself is explored.

¹⁶⁵ So it would be a mistake to assert a strict identity between the application and the institution of determinately contentful concepts: to say, for instance, that meaning is use. It is essential to see the identity that is genuinely involved (according to the pragmatist) as what Hegel calls a 'speculative' identity -that is, one that essentially incorporates a difference.

Hegel's idea is that the determinacy of the content of what you have committed yourself to—the part that is *not* up to you in the way that *whether* you commit yourself to it is up to you—is secured by the attitudes of *others*, to whom one has at least implicitly granted that authority.¹⁶⁶ His thought is that the only way to get the requisite distance from my acknowledgments (my attitudes, which make the norm binding on me in the first place) while retaining the sort of authority over my commitments that the Rousseau-Kant tradition insists on, is to have the norms *administered* by someone else. *I* commit myself, but then *they* hold me to it. For me to *be* committed, I have to have *acknowledged* a commitment, and others must *attribute* it to me. Only so is a real, contentful commitment instituted. Only so can I really be understood to have *bound* myself. This is, at base, why the possibility of *my* freedom (in the normative sense of the autonomy thesis: my capacity to commit myself, to bind myself by norms) depends on *others*. Thus Hegel maintains the apparently paradoxical view that the possibility of my autonomy depends on others adopting attitudes toward me. But the paradox is merely apparent: autonomy does not on this conception collapse into heteronomy.

Having a commitment with a definite content is intelligible, Hegel thinks, only in the context of a division of labor between the one who undertakes the commitment and those who attribute it and hold the undertaker to it. I get to decide which piece in the game I will play—say, the one labeled ‘That metal is molybdenum,’ or ‘I promise to drive you to the airport tomorrow morning,’—but I do not then get to decide *what* I have committed myself to thereby,

¹⁶⁶ Though to say it is ‘secured’ by others is not to say that it is fully *determined* by them. As will emerge below, the authority of particularity, asserted through immediate judgements, according to the other two recognitive dimensions (inferential and historical), constrains the community, and constitutes an essential element of the content they administer—the content of the norms that have reciprocal authority over them.

what further moves are appropriate or obligatory for one who has played that piece. My authority is real, but it is partial. And the same can be said of the others, who play the game with me and simultaneously referee it. For they have no authority over my acknowledging of commitments. Their authority is only operative in the administration of those commitments—holding me to a commitment with a determinate content to which they are responsible no less than I. (Compare: the legislative and judicial functions of government.) As Hegel puts it, I have a certain *independence*, in which commitments I embrace. Apart from my acknowledgment, they have no normative force over me. But in exercising that very independence, I am at the same time *dependent* on the attitudes of others, who attribute and hold me to the commitment, and thereby administer its content. And the others, reciprocally dependent on my recognition, display a corresponding moment of independence in their attitudes of attribution and assessment of my commitments and responsibilities. ‘Independence’ and ‘dependence’ are for Hegel always *normative* independence and dependence. In fact, these are ways of talking about *authority* and *responsibility*.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ If X has some sort of authority over Y, then y is in so far such responsible to X. But Hegel’s way of working through the Rousseau-Kant understanding of autonomy as the essence of normative bindingness (validity, *Gültigkeit*) requires that if X has some sort of authority over Y, then X also has some sort of responsibility toward y -- that is, that y has a reciprocal authority over x. This is a claim about the very nature of authority and responsibility: the nature of the normative as such. A commitment to the coherence of construing X as having authority over y (dually: Y’s responsibility to X) that is not balanced by Y’s reciprocal authority over X (dually, X’s responsibility to Y) is an index of thinking that remains at the meta-conceptual level Hegel calls Understanding, failing to advance to the meta-conceptual level he calls Reason. It is failing to make the categorical conceptual move from *independence* to *freedom*, in the sense of *autonomy*: being bound by norms, but by exactly those one has bound *oneself* by.

Analyzing commitments and other normative statuses as products instituted by attitudes of both acknowledgment and attribution (and so two sorts of independence or authority, and two corresponding sorts of dependence or responsibility) is appealing to the idea of mutual recognition. But the recognition involved is *specific*, rather than *general*. To recognize someone in the general sense is to take her to be a normative subject of commitments and responsibilities. One does that by attributing specific commitments and responsibilities. That is, recognition in

The actual *content* of the commitment one undertakes by applying a concept (paradigmatically, by using a word) is the product of a process of *negotiation* involving the reciprocal attitudes, and the reciprocal authority, of those who *attribute* the commitment and the one who *acknowledges* it.¹⁶⁸ What the content of one's claim or action is *in* itself results both from what it is *for* others and what it is *for* oneself. I see the account Hegel offers of this process of normative negotiation of reciprocally constraining authority by which determinate conceptual contents are instituted and applied as his main philosophical contribution, at least as assessed from the frame of reference of our contemporary concerns. This process of negotiation of competing normative claims is what Hegel calls 'experience' [Erfahrung]. Making explicit what is implicit in this process is saying how the *institution* of conceptual norms is related to their *actual application* in acknowledging, attributing, and assessing specific conceptually articulated commitments in judgement and action. It is this relationship that fills in Hegel's single-leveled, unified monistic notion of experience, the aspiration for which I have taken him to share with Quine, in contrast to the two-phase, bifurcated approach common to Kant and Carnap. It is also what the notion of reciprocal recognition is offered as a model of. The idealist claim we are

general is an abstract notion. It is what is common to all instances of specific recognition. To be a self, one must have some actual, specific commitments and responsibilities. Recognition in general is just an abstract way of talking about what is common to all specific recognition. One cannot *merely* recognize someone. Recognizing someone is always attributing some specific commitments and responsibilities -- though perhaps different ones in each case. This is why *actual* reciprocal recognition is required for me to *be* a self in the normative sense.

¹⁶⁸ Talk of *negotiation* is bound to sound far too irenic a rendering for the sort of strife and confrontation of inconsistent demands Hegel depicts. But, though the issue cannot be pursued here, I think there are good reasons to treat the martial, uncompromising language Hegel is fond of as misleading on this point. Nothing is absolutely other, nor are any claims or concepts simply inconsistent, for him. It is always material incompatibilities of content (rather than formal inconsistencies) whose mutual confrontation obliges an alteration of commitments.

considering is that concepts are instituted in the same way, and hence have the same structure and unity, as self-conscious selves.

III

Hegel thinks of Spirit—the realm of the normative—as produced and sustained by the processes of mutual recognition, which simultaneously institute self-conscious selves and their communities. I have presented this picture as motivated by the problem of how to construe *autonomy* in a way compatible with the determinateness of conceptual contents, while seeing those conceptual contents as *instituted* in the same process of experience in which they are *applied* (the pragmatist’s fundamental commitment). I have suggested that Hegel thinks that the boundaries around what one has and has not committed oneself to by using a particular concept (and what is and is not a correct application of it) are determined by a process of *negotiation* among actual attitudes of application and assessments of applications.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ This argumentative structure has not been obvious to Hegel’s readers, and I think one reason is the order of exposition he adopts in the *Phenomenology*. For Hegel starts by introducing a notion of *general* recognition (in the section on Self-Consciousness) that is, taking or treating someone as a normative subject of commitments and responsibilities in general. He asserts the essentially social character of recognition, and explores some consequences of not appreciating the essentially *reciprocal* structure that can alone make sense of normative statuses. But the content of the concept does not really emerge until later (in the section on Reason), when he discusses *specific* recognition—that is, the acknowledgment and attribution of the specific, *determinate* commitments and responsibilities involved in the use of particular, determinately contentful *concepts*, in judgment and action. It is only looking back from this vantage point (at the end of the discussion of *Reason*) that we can see recognition in general as an abstraction from specific recognition, as what all specific cognitive attitudes (the only ones that are actual) have in common. And it is at this level that the account of recognition as essentially social and reciprocal must be motivated. For this reason, the social dimension of recognition, with which I began my exposition, in the end shows itself not to be fully intelligible apart from the inferential and historical dimensions, since the determinately contentful conceptual commitments that are attributed by specific cognitive attitudes are not.

This motivation for understanding *selves*—the subjects of determinately contentful commitments and responsibilities, concept users, and hence subjects of experience, knowers and agents—in terms of mutual recognition explains why the process of reciprocal specific recognition should be taken to provide the *context* within which concepts are both applied and their contents instituted and determined. But it does not yet evidently explain why the structure and unity imparted to selves and communities by their institution by reciprocal recognition should be taken to provide a *model* for concepts—to explain *their* structure and unity. The reason that the process of reciprocal recognition, and so the structure and unity of selves, provides not only the *context* of but the *model* for the institution and application of conceptual norms is that it is not just one example of how norms are constituted by reciprocal authority (mutually dependent moments). *Wherever a norm can properly be discerned, there must be distinct centers of reciprocal authority and a process of negotiation between them.* For this, Hegel thinks, is the nature of the normative as such: the *only* way in which determinate contents can be associated with norms according to the conception of the normative embodied in the autonomy thesis. The commitment one undertakes by applying a concept in judgement or action can be construed as determinately contentful only if it is to be *administered* by others distinct from the one whose commitment it is. So in acknowledging such a commitment, one is at least implicitly recognizing the authority of others over the content to which one has committed oneself.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ It is up to me both what concept I apply in judging or acting, and who has the authority to administer it. For a norm to be intelligible as *binding*, as having genuine normative *force*, though, the moment of independence (authority) exercised by the one on whom it is binding (in virtue of *his* acknowledgment of that normative status) must be understood as balanced by a moment of dependence on (responsibility to) those who attribute and assess it. And as we'll see,

But how, exactly, are we to understand the structure and unity of concepts on the model of reciprocal recognition among selves? For Hegel, as for Kant, *all* norms are *conceptual* norms: talk of norms and talk of concepts are alternatives for addressing one fundamental common phenomenon. The first thing to realize is that Hegel understands concepts, the contents of norms, as essentially *inferentially* articulated.¹⁷¹ Hegel discusses this inferential articulation (in the *Phenomenology* beginning in the section on Perception) under the headings of ‘mediation’ [Vermittlung] and ‘determinate negation’. The paradigm of mediation, the case responsible for this choice of terminology, is the role played by the middle term in a syllogism. The application of the mediating concept serves as the *conclusion* of one inference, and the *premise* of another.¹⁷² The claim that *mediation*, the capacity to play this role, is essential to concepts is the claim that being able to figure both in the premises and in the conclusions of *inferences* is

this is not the only moment of normative dependence in play. Those who attribute and assess the commitment are obliged also to acknowledge the authority of prior applications (which includes the authority of immediacy), in their administration of the content those applications institute.

¹⁷¹ Readers of my book *Making It Explicit* are liable, at this point, to suspect me of simply reading my own views into Hegel, starting with a socially perspectival normative approach to pragmatics, and now moving on to an inferential approach to semantics. The similarity is not coincidental, but the order of influence runs in the other direction: I came to these thoughts from reading Hegel, and went on to develop them in my own way. I construe what I’m doing now as trying to acknowledge the debt, rather than foisting my views on Hegel.

¹⁷² In the syllogism:

Judgements are applications of concepts,
Applications of concepts are inferentially articulated, therefore

Judgements are inferentially articulated,

the concept *application of concepts* plays the role of the middle term, which mediates the inference from the applicability of the concept *judgement* to the applicability of the concept *inferentially articulated*. The mediating concept formulates the conclusion of the inference from ‘X is a judgement’ to ‘X is the application of a concept’ and the premise of the inference from ‘X is the application of a concept’ to ‘X is inferentially articulated’.

essential to concepts. This is what I mean by talking about their ‘essential inferential articulation’.¹⁷³

In a similar way, when Hegel talks about ‘determinate negation’ he means material incompatibility relations among concepts: the way the applicability of one concept normatively precludes the applicability of another. An example would be the way calling a patch of paint ‘red’ precludes calling it ‘green’.¹⁷⁴ Formal or logical negation (what Hegel calls ‘abstract’ negation) is definable from the determinate or material version. The abstract negation of p is its minimum incompatible: what follows from everything materially incompatible with p . It abstracts from the determinate content of those incompatibles, and so is *merely* incompatible.¹⁷⁵ Together the material inferential and material incompatibility relations (relations of mediation and determinate negation) articulate the contents of conceptual norms.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ The inferences in question are not (just) formally or logically good inferences, such as the syllogism, but also the *materially* correct inferences that are implicit in their premises. These are inferences whose goodness depends on and articulates the *nonlogical content* of the concepts involved. In the example above, that judgements (and actions) are applications of concepts is an element essential to the contents of those particular concepts. An example would be the inference from ‘Pittsburgh is to the West of New York: to ‘New York is to the East of Pittsburgh’. Given material, that is, content-articulating, proprieties of inference, various sorts of formally valid inferences can be understood as material proprieties that are robust under corresponding kinds of substitution.

¹⁷⁴ Another example might be the incompatibility involved in a Newtonian mass accelerating in the absence of imposed forces.

¹⁷⁵ One can derive relations of mediation from those of determinate negation—that is, relations of material *inference* from those of material *incompatibility*. For p incompatibility entails q just in case everything incompatible with q is incompatible with p (though perhaps not conversely). Thus being a dog entails being a mammal, because everything incompatible with being a mammal is incompatible with being a dog. Hegel often talks as though *negation* were the fundamental content-articulating notion.

¹⁷⁶ It is ultimately in terms of them that we must understand the analogue of recognitive relations for concepts: what plays the role for concepts that reciprocal recognition in the paradigmatic sense plays for individual self-conscious selves, according to the idealist thesis. But we must remember the pragmatist thesis as well. That thesis, common ground between Hegel and Quine,

We are now in a position to approach the central question. The model of the sort of reciprocal recognition that institutes *selves* and their *communities* applies to the institution and application of concepts in experience at two levels. First, it describes the relations of reciprocal authority that relate *particulars* to the *universals* or determinate concepts that they fall under: the way in which determinate concepts are instituted and the judgements that present characterized individuals are made. Individuals, which are particulars characterized by concepts, and determinate concepts are simultaneously instituted or synthesized—just as in the model, individual self-conscious selves, *as* members of a community (as characterized by a universal), and their communities (universals) are simultaneously instituted or synthesized. Second, it describes the relations of reciprocal authority that relate determinate concepts to each other. At this level, determinate concepts and what Hegel calls ‘the Concept’, the great holistic, inferentially articulated *system* of determinate concepts and judgements articulated by those concepts—a sort of universal or community comprising them all—are simultaneously instituted or synthesized.

says that *instituting* conceptual norms and *applying* them are two sides of one coin, two aspects of one process. Doing the former is settling *meanings*, determining the boundaries distinguishing *correct* or *appropriate* application from applications that would be incorrect or inappropriate. Doing the latter is making judgements (and performing actions), and assessing such performances -in practice *taking* particular applications to be correct or incorrect, *treating* them as appropriate or not. Thus Quine insists that settling one’s meanings is not a process separate from settling one’s beliefs. For Hegel, it is in making and assessing judgements and actions -that is, in experience -that we determine the contents of the conceptual norms that govern that process. The coordinate status of concepts and judgements is an essential feature of the monistic approach to which these pragmatists are committed. So material inferential and incompatibility relations among concepts must be understood as features of the process of adopting actual attitudes, actually applying those concepts: taking or treating some applications *as* appropriate by undertaking conceptually articulated commitments in the form of judgements (or actions), and by assessing the appropriateness of such commitments. It is this process that, according to the idealist, can usefully be construed as involving constitutive relations of mutual recognition.

Judgments, acts of judging, come in two flavors: *mediate* and *immediate*. The mediate ones are the results of *inferences* from other judgements—that is, from the application of *other* concepts one has already made. The immediate ones are noninferentially elicited, paradigmatically *perceptual* judgements or observations.¹⁷⁷ Desiring animals already sort their world by responding differentially to it—treating something as food, for instance, by ‘falling to without further ado and eating it up.’¹⁷⁸ Immediate judgements are ones that a properly trained and tuned animal who has mastered the responsive use of the relevant concepts will make automatically, when confronted with the perceptible presence of a reportable or observable state of affairs. These noninferential applications of concepts (= immediate judgements) are wrung from or elicited by the *particulars* to which the concepts are on that occasion applied. By contrast, responsibility for (= authority over) *inferentially* elicited applications of concepts (= mediate judgements) is vested in the concepts or *universals*, whose inferential relations underwrite the judgement that is the conclusion.

Immediate judgements express a dimension along which particulars exert an authority over the universals or concepts that apply to them. *Mediate* judgements express a dimension along which universals or concepts exert an authority over the particulars to which they apply.

¹⁷⁷ Of course, even these are inferentially *articulated*: they are applications of concepts, and so essentially something that can serve as premises for inference. Their immediacy consists in their being *non* inferential *only* in the sense that commitment that is the judgement was not undertaken as the result of a process of inference. That this is the only sense in which judgements can be noninferential is one of the central lessons of the Perception section of the *Phenomenology*, and of Wilfrid Sellars’ seminal chapter ‘Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind’. See my discussion in Sellars, W., *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* with an Introduction by Richard Rorty and a Study Guide by Robert Brandom. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

¹⁷⁸ Hegel, G.W.F. (1807), *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller (1977). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). §109, p. 65.

The characterized individuals—particulars *as* falling under universals—that are presented by judgements (=applications of concepts) emerge as the product of *negotiation* between the two reciprocal dimensions of authority (each with its own dual, correlative sort of responsibility). This is the feature of concept use and development—the process of experience that is for this reason intelligible at once as the application and as the institution of conceptual norms—that is modeled by reciprocal recognition. Hegel's *Logic* aims to be the completed story of how this works.

Evidently the two sorts of authority may collide. One may find oneself immediately with commitments incompatible with those to which one is inferentially committed. Then one must *alter* some of one's commitments—either those that are authorized by the particulars (immediately) or those that are authorized by the universals (mediately). This necessity is *normative*: one is *obliged* by the incompatibility of one's judgements, by the commitments one has oneself undertaken, to adjust either the authority of the particulars or of the universal. Making an adjustment of one's conceptual commitments in the light of such a collision is what is meant by *negotiating* between the two dimensions of authority.¹⁷⁹ The process of adjusting one's dispositions to make immediate and mediate judgements in response to actual conflicts arising from exercising them is the process Hegel calls 'experience'. It drives the *development* of concepts. It is the process of *determining* their content. It is how *applying* conceptual norms is at the same time the process of *instituting* them. Conceptual contents are *determinate* only

¹⁷⁹ For empirical concepts, at any rate, I don't think that Hegel is committed to there being in every case a unique answer that can be settled in advance to the question of how such conflicts ought to be resolved, which commitments should be modified or relinquished. Such a concrete conflict might be resolved, for instance, by judging that one cannot reliably noninferentially apply colour terms if the objects in question are illuminated only by incandescent electric lights, or that the applicability of Q is entailed only by the applicability of P&5, not of P by itself.

because and in so far as they are the products of such a process of *determining* them *by* applying them in inferential concert with their fellows.¹⁸⁰

This process of *negotiation* between acknowledged authorities upon their disagreement is the process of *administering* the sometimes opposed authorities of particulars and universals. It is constitutive of *both* the Concept, as the holistic system of all the determinate universals (empirical concepts) related by material inference and incompatibility (mediation and determinate negation), *and* the characterized particulars presented by a set of judgements, a set of commitments that are actual applications of universals to particulars. Concepts and judgements, meanings and beliefs, languages and theories, are two sides of one coin, intelligible only together, as elements of the process of experience. This view should sound familiar: it is Quine's in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'. Seeing change of meaning and change of belief as aspects of a single process of experience, of adjusting our beliefs (including those we find ourselves with

¹⁸⁰ Talk of this process of experience as driven by the 'restless negativity' of concepts is an appeal to the role played in it by the fact that makes our empirical concepts permanently subject to the possibility of revision: their potential to give rise to determinately incompatible judgements (immediate and mediate). And though the point cannot be pursued here, it is of the utmost significance that because concepts develop and become more determinate in this way *immediacy*, *contingency*, and *particularity* are *incorporated* into the contents of those concepts. Suppose we have well-developed differential responsive dispositions leading us immediately to classify particulars as *sour* and as *red* or *blue*, and inferential commitments to the propriety of inferring the applicability of the universal *acid* from that of *sour*, and to acids turning Litmus paper red. Then upon being confronted with something that tastes sour and turns Litmus paper blue (which by our own lights again is incompatible with its being red), we are committed to changing our commitments. Whether it is our noninferential differential responsive dispositions, or our inferential commitments that we adjust, the world's immediacy has been incorporated into our concepts by this development. What is required by our concepts is denominated 'necessary', so what is here incorporated is also intelligible as the *contingency* of the world. And it is the authority of particulars over our universals that is thereby exercised by the judgements we find ourselves with immediately.

perceptually) to one another, is Quine's way of working out his pragmatist commitment. We are now in a position to see it also as Hegel's way of working out his idealist commitment.¹⁸¹

IV

Hegel often discusses the relation between selves and concepts in the language of *identity*. For instance:

¹⁸¹ Recognitive relations model the reciprocal dimensions of authority in play here at two levels. On the one hand, the Concept stands to its constituent determinate empirical concepts as community to individual self. On the other hand, the determinate empirical universal stands to the characterized individual as community to self. It is judgements that tie together the two limbs of this structure. In fact this one process of experience *is* -- not just is modelled on -- the process by which *self-conscious selves* are synthesized. Selves in the *normative* sense introduced by Kant are the loci of responsibility for sorting out incompatibilities. The transcendental unity of apperception is what is responsible *for* judgements, its obligation to sort out incompatibilities among applications of concepts being what makes them *its* judgements. So it is misleading to think of the mutual recognition synthesizing selves as available in principle in advance of understanding the inferentially articulated reciprocal authority of universals and particulars. For general recognition is an abstraction from specific recognition, which involves negotiating the potentially competing authority of particulars and universals. That requirement constrains and makes determinate the content those who attribute a commitment administer.

The responsibility you and I have to negotiate the claims of different authorities so as to eliminate incompatibilities between *your* empirical judgements and *mine*, while real, is in principle secondary to and derivative from the responsibility each of us has to sort out incompatibilities among our *own* commitments. (Although I cannot pursue the matter here, in the Perception section of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel develops an account of *objects* (particulars) -- what our judgments are responsible *to* on the side of particularity -- as units of account for the responsibilities triggered by incompatibilities in a parallel fashion. To say that two colours are incompatible properties is to say that no *one particular* can exhibit both, not that two different objects cannot exhibit them severally, And it is in terms of just this fact that we are to draw boundaries around particulars. A corresponding dual condition applies to the individuation of properties or concepts.) The self-conscious individual self is the self who exerts specific recognitive authority and is subject to specific recognitive responsibility, the self who undertakes and attributes determinately contentful conceptual commitments by making judgements (including assessments of the judgments of others). We understand the structure and unity of such selves, and of their communities, in terms of reciprocal recognition. And it is in exactly the same terms that we understand the structure and unity of both the characterized individuals that are the topics of (the most basic form of) judgment, and the determinately contentful concepts or universals that are applied in making those judgments. This is Hegel's fundamental idealist thesis.

The Notion [Begriff], when it has developed into a *concrete existence* that is itself free, is none other than the *I* or pure self-consciousness. True, I *have* notions, that is to say determinate notions; but the *I* is the pure Notion itself which, as Notion, has come into *existence*.¹⁸²

We have seen how the *I*, self-conscious selves in general, as the normative subjects of conceptually articulated commitments--judgements (and actions)—are synthesized as essential aspects (Hegel says ‘moments’) of the process of experience whose other essential elements include both those judgements and the concepts that are applied in them. And we have seen that the structure and unity of this process in all its aspects should be understood in terms of the kind of reciprocal authority relations Hegel calls ‘recognitive’. Still, the different aspects of this process and of recognitive structures generally remain distinct and distinguishable. They are not *identical* to one another in a strict or logical sense. Hegel acknowledges this. The passage above continues with a characterization of recognitive structures that is abstract in the way characteristic of the Logic, concluding:

. . . this [structure] constitutes the nature of the *I* as well as of the Notion; neither the one nor the other can be truly comprehended unless the two indicated moments are grasped at the same time both in their abstraction and also in their perfect unity .¹⁸³

The unity of the recognitive structure leads Hegel to talk (in my view, unfortunately) of the essentially related moments of that structure as *identical*. They are not identical in the

¹⁸² [Hegel *SL*] p. 583.

¹⁸³ [Hegel *SL*] p. 583.

ordinary sense, since they are also essentially distinct. But he wants us to recognize them nonetheless as identical in a speculative sense. In this speculative sense, elements of a recognitive structure of reciprocal authority that are intelligible only *as* elements related to one another in such a structure are described as ‘identical’ with one another. It is in this sense that Hegel talks about selves as being identical with their communities, about particulars as identical with the universals that characterize them, about determinate concepts as identical with the holistic Concept that comprises them as a system of inferentially related elements, and so on. Only confusion results if this speculative sense of ‘identical’ is confused with the ordinary notion of identity. For then the specific structure of recognition by which these different elements are at once distinguished and related is in danger of collapsing. Collapsing them renders unintelligible determinately contentful normative statuses: the judgements (and actions) that make up experience, the selves that undertake, attribute, and are responsible for them, their recognitive communities, the determinate concepts that articulate those responsibilities by the relations of material inference and incompatibility that make up the greater universal that is the Concept, the particulars to which judgements have a responsibility mediated by immediate judgements, and so on.

It remains to consider one final dimension of the recognitive structure within which the relation between selves and concepts must be understood. This is a dimension Hegel also discusses in the language of identity, but in a way that should be understood, I think, neither in the strict nor in the speculative sense. I have in mind here the considerations that are raised by Hegel’s claim—which looms large for instance in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*—that Spirit as a whole should be understood as a *self*. I understand the ‘geistig’ as the realm of conceptually

articulated norms, of authority and responsibility, commitment and entitlement. Spirit as a whole is the cognitive community of all those who have such normative statuses, and all their normatively significant activities. It is, in other words, the topic of the pragmatist's enquiry: the whole system of social practices of the most inclusive possible community. Claiming that Spirit has the structure and unity of the self is another idealist thesis, and it, too, should be understood in terms of Hegel's pragmatism.

In making this second idealist claim, Hegel obviously does not mean for us to think that Spirit as a whole is just one more of us ordinary selves, an element of some community of which we are also members. But neither, I think, does he just mean that Spirit is an element of the cognitive structure of which we individual selves are elements—so that we could talk about us and the great community that comprises us cognitively as identical in the speculative sense. He means that Spirit as a whole—the whole cognitive community of which we individual selves are members, and all of its activities and institutions—has the structure and unity characteristic of the self-conscious self. In that technical sense, it is an individual, though not one associated with a particular organism, as we human selves are.

I think that there is all sorts of evidence that Hegel means his remarks about Spirit as Self to have something like this import. Certainly that is the way he is usually read. It is much less often remarked that attributing such a view to Hegel in the *Phenomenology* raises a substantial interpretive problem. For Hegel clearly subscribes there to the following three claims:

1. Spirit is a self-conscious self.

2. Self-conscious self-hood is an essentially *social* achievement, requiring actual recognition *of and by* an *other*, to whom the individual self achieving self-consciousness in this way is then bound in a recognitive *community*.
3. Spirit has no other; there is nothing 'outside' it.

The trouble is of course that these claims are jointly incompatible. But Hegel commits himself to them all—not just casually or in a way that could represent a slip, but as essential elements of his view. Now much of what I have said in this chapter does not represent conventional wisdom about Hegel's views. But attributing *these* three claims is not an idiosyncratic feature of my reading: it *is* conventional wisdom. Yet discussion of the conceptual problems these theses present does not loom large in the secondary literature. (The claim one sometimes hears that Hegel is in the end a kind of *subjectivist* is, I take it, at least an indirect acknowledgment of these difficulties.) It seems to me that the extent to which a reading acknowledges and provides a convincing response to this issue should serve as a fundamental criterion of adequacy for assessing it.

The account I have been sketching of the nature and significance of reciprocal recognition for understanding the nature of normative statuses provides the raw materials for such a response. Further, in doing so it fills in an important piece of the story about how *applying* conceptual norms by making judgements can be understood as a process of *determining* their content, and so as *instituting* those norms. In so far as it does, it offers a final respect in which Hegel's *idealism* and his *pragmatism* (in the senses I have been discussing) illuminate one another.

Reciprocal recognition, I have claimed, is for Hegel the structure that makes the normative intelligible as such. In its paradigmatic *social* form, it institutes both individual self-conscious *selves* (the subjects of commitments and responsibilities) and their communities (the selves bound together by attributing and assessing commitments to each other, holding each other responsible). In its *inferential* form, this structure characterizes the relationship between particulars and universals in the process of making *judgements* that is experience: the application of determinate concepts. It is exhibited as well in the relations of reciprocal authority by which applications of some determinate concepts condition the applicability of other, inferentially related concepts, thereby constituting the ‘community’ of all determinate concepts, structured by relations of mediation and determinate negation, that is the Concept. In addition to these two forms of reciprocal recognition, we should recognize a third: the *historical*. It arises because negotiating and adjudicating the claims of reciprocally conditioning authorities, administering conceptual norms by applying them in actual cases (to particulars that immediately present themselves) is a *process*. In that process of experience, conceptual norms *develop*, along with the body of claims or judgements expressing the commitments that arise from applying those concepts. This developmental process of progressively determining the content of concepts by applying them in concert with their fellows is to be understood as the way determinately contentful conceptual norms are *instituted*.

Experience—at once the application and the institution of conceptual norms—is not merely a *temporal* process, but a *historical* one. By this I mean that it exhibits a distinctive *recognitive* structure that is the product of the reciprocal authority exercised on the one hand by past applications of concepts over future ones, and on the other hand by future applications of

concepts over past ones. All there is to institute conceptual norms, to determine *what* we have committed ourselves to by applying a concept, is *other* applications of the concept in question, together with applications of concepts inferentially related to it. Thus the applications of the concept (and its relatives) that have actually been made already have a certain sort of *authority* over candidate future applications of that concept (and so of its relatives). The prior applications are authoritative regarding the meaning or content of the concept. This is the authority of the past (applications of concepts) over the future (applications of concepts)—providing a sense in which future applications are responsible for their correctness to the past ones.

But authority needs to be administered. Applications of norms instituted by prior applications need to be assessed for their correctness, according to the norms they answer to. For current applications of a concept to *be* responsible to prior applications of that concept (and its relatives), they must be *held* responsible, taken or treated *as* responsible. That is the lesson of Hegel's analysis of the conditions under which the *bindingness* of norms is intelligible, according to what he made of the Kant-Rousseau insistence on autonomy as a condition of genuine normativity—the lesson that is the basis for the model of reciprocal recognition. For we can ask in the present context: How is it possible for an application of a concept to count as *incorrect* according to the commitments implicit in prior applications? If there is nothing to the content of the concept except what has been put into it by actual applications of it (and its relatives), how can any actual application be understood as incorrect according to that content? If it cannot, then no norm has been instituted.

Here, I think, is Hegel's answer: The authority of the past applications, which instituted the conceptual norm, is administered on its behalf by *future* applications, which include assessments of past ones. It is for later users of a concept to decide whether each earlier application was correct or not, according to the tradition constituted by still earlier uses. In doing so, the future applications exercise a reciprocal authority over past ones. The model of this process that I find it most useful to keep in mind (though it is not one Hegel ever suggests) is the development of concepts of common law by precedent. Common law differs from statute law in consisting entirely of *case* law. It is not the interpretation of explicit founding laws, rules, or principles. *All* there is to it is a sequence of applications of concepts to actual sets of facts. It is for this reason often thought of as judge-made law.

Consider an idealized version of this process. Each judge inherits a tradition of cases, which can be thought of as a set of particulars (the facts of the case, described in non-legal vocabulary) to which legal universals such as 'tort', 'strictly liable', and so on have been applied (or withheld). The judge is in turn confronted with a novel particular case (set of facts), and must decide whether to apply or withhold application of one of those universals—classifying the actions in question as constituting a specific tort, or as involving the assumption of strict liability. The authority of the tradition consists in the fact that the *only reasons* the judge can appeal to in justifying his decision are precedential: the fact that the universal in question was actually applied or withheld in previous cases that resemble the one in question in respects the judge specifies (while of course differing in other respects). The concepts the judge is charged with applying have their content entirely constituted by the history of their actual application (along with the history of actual application of any other legal concepts that have in the tradition

actually been taken to be inferentially related to them). It is this tradition to which the judge is *responsible*. The contents of those concepts have been instituted entirely by their being applied. The reciprocal authority of the judge includes¹⁸⁴ the authority to sort the previous cases into those that are and those that are not *precedential*. These are the previous applications that, according to the judge, demarcate the content of the concept. A prior decided case can be treated as not precedential, as not potentially authoritative with respect to the case in question, because the judge sees it as *mistaken*, given the decisions that articulate the content of the concept, that is, in light of the qualitative or quantitative preponderance of precedent. (Here the inferential connections to other concepts the judge takes to have been established by prior decisions, together with the precedents for applying those concepts can weigh in as well.) This sort of assessment must itself be justified, by a sort of rational reconstruction of the tradition of applying the legal concept in question, along with the precedents selected as most relevant, in framing the rationale for deciding the case one way rather than the other. It is because *every* decision of a case has this shape, involves the exercise of this sort of discretion or authority, and there is *nothing more* to the content of the legal concepts being applied than the content they acquire through a tradition of such decisions, that the principles that emerge from this process are appropriately thought of as ‘judge-made law’.¹⁸⁵ But the contents the judges in this sense *make*

¹⁸⁴ Only ‘includes’ because it has other dimensions as well. For instance, the judge has the authority to sort the various respects of similarity and dissimilarity between the facts of the present case and the facts of the previously decided cases, treating some as more important than others for the issue of whether the legal concept in question should be applied or withheld to the present facts. This makes some of the prior cases already classified as properly decided more, and others less, relevant to the decision in question. That in turn affects the authority of prior applications of inferentially related concepts.

¹⁸⁵ Kant’s two-phase account would correspond to an insistence that every tradition of common or case law be grounded in some prior statute. This is a kind of intellectualism, which insists that behind every norm implicit in a practice there must be a norm explicit in a rule. (Pragmatism is the converse of intellectualism in this sense, insisting that any sort of explicit, theoretical

is also constrained by what they *find*, the precedential applications of concepts (both immediate and inferential) whose authority the judges are subject to, at the same time that they inherit it and administer it.

Sensitized as I hope we are by now to the structure of reciprocal authority (and so of responsibility) Hegel calls ‘mutual recognition’, we should be able to discern it in the idealized judicial process I have sketched. Past applications of concepts (decisions of cases) exercise an authority over future ones. For they supply the precedents that constitute the only rationales available to justify future decisions. They are the source of the content of the concepts later judges are charged with applying. This is the moment of independence, of recognition, of constitutive authority of the past over the future, and so the future’s dependence on its past. But reciprocally, later applications of concepts by the judges who inherit the tradition exercise an authority over the earlier ones. For the significance of the authority of the tradition, what conceptual content exactly it is taken to have instituted, is decided by the judges currently making decisions. They *administer* the norms, *make* them determinately binding. This is the moment of independence, of recognition, of constitutive authority of the future over the past, and so of the past’s dependence on its future. For except in so far as the current judge *recognizes* or acknowledges the authority of some prior decision, it has none. What the norm *really* is (what it

knowing *that* have as its background some sort of implicit practical knowing *how*.) The intellectualist thinks that only *if fully* and *finally* determinate norms have already been instituted has any distinction between their correct and incorrect application been made available for the next phase. Hegel, the pragmatist, denies that any concepts are fully and finally determinate in this sense, that is, independently of the actual course of the practice of applying them. For Hegel’s purposes (and mine) the details (such as they are) of Kant’s account of the institution or discovery of conceptual norms in judgements of reflection doesn’t matter at all. *All* that is important is the two-phase structure he envisages.

is *in* itself) is the product of recognitive *negotiation* between these two poles of reciprocal authority (what the content is *for* the past judges and what it is *for* the present one).

Now it may seem that the situation here is not symmetric. For the present judge may seem to have the last word. After all, the judge deciding a case now can ignore or at least dismiss inconvenient prior decisions, treating them as misapplications of the concepts in question—as wrongly decided cases—or as irrelevant because dissimilar from the case at issue in the respects the present judge has decided to treat as most important. So it seems that the current judge owes to the past only the debts she herself decides to acknowledge. And if and in so far as that is true, the authority of the past decisions, the content they have conferred on the legal concepts, is empty and indeterminate. The fact that the judge must justify her present decision by appealing to prior decisions then would impose a merely *formal* constraint. Her discretion in choosing and applying precedents—in effect, retrospectively reconstructing the tradition by selective omission and selective emphasis—would render that constraint contentless. The voice of the past cannot be thought of as having authority over the present, if the present can decide both which bits to listen to, and how to interpret them.

This is an intelligible description of the situation, and the worries it engenders have properly engaged jurisprudential theorists. But in fact symmetry of authority, genuinely reciprocal recognition, is achieved in this process. Genuine authority, I have claimed on Hegel's behalf, must be *administered*. Talk of my being responsible to something is appropriate only where there is someone to *hold* me responsible to it. The current judge administers the norms instituted and determined by past applications. But who is there to hold the current judge

responsible to the tradition of prior applications, to assess the fidelity of her decision to the content actually conferred on the legal concepts by the tradition she inherits? The appearance of asymmetry of authority between past and present is the result of not considering the answer to this question. But it is clear what the answer is. The current judge is held accountable to the tradition she inherits by the judges yet to come. For her decision matters for the content of the concept in question only in so far as its precedential authority is acknowledged or recognized in turn by future judges. If they take her case to have been misdecided, given *their* reading of the tradition she inherited, then the current judge's decision has no authority at all. The authority of the past over the present is administered on its behalf by the future. Since this process has no endpoint in principle, no finally authoritative authority not dependent in turn on its acknowledgment or recognition, the normative situation is entirely symmetrical. And to say that is to say, according to Hegel's way of working out the Kant-Rousseau autonomy thought in terms of reciprocal recognition, that genuine, determinately contentful conceptual norms *are* instituted by a process of applying them that has this historical structure.¹⁸⁶ Determinate conceptual norms are intelligible only as features of an actual tradition that is structured

¹⁸⁶ Hegel thinks that because concepts acquire determinate content only as a result of their role in such a tradition of being applied, their contents can only be presented or conveyed by offering a rationally reconstructed trajectory by which they might have developed. This is what he does for his most basic logical concepts in both the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic*. The proprieties that govern the use of the vocabulary Hegel uses to make explicit the workings of ordinary concepts are conveyed by exploring various *misuses* and misunderstandings, which while capturing some of the eventual content, still lead to discordant and incompatible commitments. In taking the explanatory tack that I do in this chapter, I am implicitly disagreeing that this procedure is necessary. I think the logical concepts are different from ordinary empirical concepts (Hegel's 'determinate' concepts), since they get their content from their explicating role. I think it is possible to bypass the rehearsal of a path of development of their content and directly present the contents those concepts are taken to have at the end of Hegel's two books. My strategy here has been to use the model of reciprocal recognition to do that.

recognitively, having reciprocal authorities negotiating and administering along all three cognitive dimensions: social, inferential, and historical.

Hegel's pragmatism, I have claimed, consists in his commitment to understanding determinately contentful empirical conceptual norms as instituted by *experience*, the process of *using* those concepts by applying them in practice: making judgements and performing actions. His idealism consists in understanding this process of experience as exhibiting a constellation of reciprocal authority whose paradigm is mutual recognition: the structure and unity of the self-conscious individual self. Thus we are to use the same concepts in terms of which we understand *selves* to understand *concepts*. The cognitive structure of reciprocal authority necessary to make intelligible the bindingness of determinately contentful norms has three dimensions: social, inferential, and historical. In this chapter I have not been able to pursue the intricate interactions among these dimensions that Hegel delineates for us. But I have tried to sketch what I take to be Hegel's most basic thought: his way of working out the Kant-Rousseau insight about a fundamental kind of normativity based on autonomy according to the model of reciprocal authority and responsibility whose paradigm is mutual recognition. I think this is the master idea that animates and structures Hegel's metaphysics and logic.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Though the emphases are different in each of the great systematic works -more on the social and historical dimensions in the *Phenomenology*, more on the inferential in the *Science of Logic* - I think the whole three dimensional structure is present throughout. The big test for this reading will be the sense it can make of Hegel's radically new construal of the relation of reciprocal authority (and so responsibility) between subject and object (certainty and truth, what things are *for* consciousness and what they are *in* themselves, concept and being), which articulates the structure at once of consciousness (including the relation between spontaneity and receptivity, making and finding) and of the Idea. I think that we can learn a lot about this central relation by examining the interactions among the three dimensions of reciprocal authority that I have examined here. I hope to be able to tell this story on another occasion.

And as a sort of a bonus, we have also, I hope, seen enough to know how to respond to the puzzle I raised about how to understand Hegel's talk of Spirit as a whole as a self-conscious individual *self*, in the context of his insistence on the irreducibly *social* character of the achievement of self-consciousness. The reciprocal recognitive structure within which Spirit as a whole comes to self-consciousness is *historical*. It is a relation between different time slices of Spirit, in which the present acknowledges the authority of the past, and exercises an authority over it in turn, with the negotiation of their conflicts administered by the future. This is the recognitive structure of *tradition*, which articulates the normative structure of the process of *development* by which concepts acquire their contents by being applied in experience. This process is what Hegel's pragmatism and his idealism aim ultimately to illuminate. Making that structure explicit is achieving the form of self-consciousness Hegel calls 'Absolute Knowledge', some of the outlines of which I have tried to convey here.

Chapter Nine

Holism and Idealism in Hegel's *Phenomenology*

I. Introduction

The opening *Consciousness* section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* addresses our understanding of the physical world around us. The next section, *Self-Consciousness*, begins to consider our understanding of ourselves and each other. This order of discussion is neither arbitrary, nor merely convenient. Rather, one of the principal lessons we are to have learned by the end of the development of *Consciousness* is that our best conception of the world that is the *object* of our cognitive activities is intelligible only as part of a story that also considers the nature of the *subject* engaging in those activities. The rationale for this expository transition is an important strand in Hegel's *idealism*. In this chapter I'll offer a rational reconstruction of an argument that I see as supporting this transition and the kind of idealism it embodies.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ By way of warning, if not preparation, for those who may not have read the fuller discussion of this issue in Chapter Three of *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, I should say that it is a *de re* reading of the relevant portions of the text, not a *de dicto* one. As I use and develop these notions in *Making It Explicit*, these are two styles in which one can specify the contents of the very same claims. By "content" I understand broadly inferential role. Grasping a content is, to a first approximation, knowing what follows from it, what is incompatible with it, and what would be evidence for it. But now an issue arises concerning the source of the auxiliary hypotheses one conjoins with it in order to extract those inferential consequences. Presenting the content in the *de dicto* way requires restricting oneself to appeal only to other collateral commitments specified

II. The problem: understanding the *determinateness* of the objective world.

Hegel starts the line of thought I'll be rehearsing with the everyday idea of how things are—the idea that there is some way the world is. Understanding how things are or might be is grasping a certain sort of *content*. And his first observation is that that content—the way things are or could be taken to be—must be *determinate*. That is to say at a minimum that there must be a distinction between things being that way and them being some other way.

1) The way things objectively are must be *definite* or *determinate*.

Determinateness is a matter of identity and individuation. It concerns how one thing is distinguished from others.

In thinking about the sort of difference implicit in the notion of determinateness, it is important to distinguish between two different kinds of difference. Properties (for instance) can be *different*, but compatible, as **square** and **red** are. We might call this "mere" difference. But properties can also be different in the stronger sense of material incompatibility—of the

in terms that one takes it the one to whom one attributes the claim in question would also acknowledge commitment. Presenting the content in the *de re* way relaxes this restriction, and permits the employment of auxiliary hypotheses the interpreter takes to be *true*, whether or not the target of the ascription knows or believes them. At several crucial junctures in my story, I will help myself to moves that Hegel does *not* explicitly make, but which I endorse as correct and important insights, in characterizing the thought that Hegel is expressing. (As an alternative model of this procedure, one might think of domain extension in mathematics. Often an important pattern involving one domain of objects—say, the distribution of roots of polynomial equations with coefficients in the real numbers—only becomes apparent when one considers them as a subset of a wider domain, for instance, the complex numbers. Only the perspective of the extended structure lets us see what is already true of the more restricted one.) In the present case, I will signal explicitly when I am importing something into the Hegelian story to make the underlying rationale I discern more visible.

impossibility of one and the same thing simultaneously exhibiting both—as **square** and **triangular** are. We might call this "exclusive" difference. Although I cannot discuss here how the point is made, in *Sense Certainty* Hegel argues that the idea of a world exhibiting definiteness or determinateness as *mere* [gleichgültige, translated by Miller as "indifferent"] difference, without *exclusive* [ausschliessende] difference, is incoherent. This is why compatibly different properties always come as members of families of exclusively different ones.¹⁸⁹

Hegel embraces the medieval (and Spinozist) principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*. But mere difference is not yet the *negation* that determinateness requires according to this principle. For an essential, defining property of negation is the exclusiveness codified in the principle of noncontradiction: *p* rules out *not-p*, they are *incompatible*. For Hegel, it is this exclusiveness that is the essence of negation. He abstracts this feature from the case of formal negation, and generalizes it to include the sort of material incompatibility that obtains between the properties **square** and **triangular**. (Formal negation can then reappear as the shadow of material incompatibility: *not-p* is the *minimal* incompatible of *p*. It is what is entailed by everything materially incompatible with *p*.) In a conceptually deep sense, far from rejecting the law of noncontradiction, I want to claim that Hegel radicalizes it, and places it at the very center of his thought.¹⁹⁰

So his idea is that

2) The essence of determinateness is modally robust *exclusion*.

¹⁸⁹ All citations from the *Phenomenology* are paragraph numbers from A.V. Miller's Oxford University Press translation, hereafter cited as *M*. Cf. [M114], quoted below (note 4).

¹⁹⁰ He can then reject the merely formal principle in the sense that he does not take it to be an adequate expression of the crucial relation of *determinate* negation.

One understands items (for instance propositions or properties) as determinate just insofar as one understands them as standing to each other in relations of material incompatibility.

The many determinate properties...are only determinate in so far as they *differentiate* themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves to others as to their opposites.¹⁹¹

It is through its *determinateness* that the thing excludes others. Things are therefore in and for themselves determinate; they have properties by which they distinguish themselves from others...They are determinate properties in it only because they are a plurality of reciprocally self-differentiating elements.¹⁹²

The idea Hegel is working with here is a common feature of both contemporary information theoretic and possible worlds approaches to semantics. The concept of the information conveyed by a signal is defined in terms of the way its reception serves to restrict, for the receiver, some antecedent set of possibilities. Before receiving the message I only knew the number lay between 0 and 100. Afterwards I know that it is an *even* number in that range. (This fundamental idea must not be confused with the much more specific strategy for working it out that assigns numbers as *measures* of information in that sense.) The defining function of information is to rule out possibilities. Again, possible worlds semantics sees a proposition as significant just insofar as it effects a *partition* of the space of possible worlds. Its correctness *excludes* the actual world from one element of the partition (although rhetorically the focus is usually put on its being *included* in the other).

¹⁹¹ [M114].

¹⁹² [M120].

The concept of material incompatibility, or as Hegel calls it "determinate negation", is his most fundamental conceptual tool. Here are two uses of it that are particularly important for articulating the sort of idealism that is my topic.

- First, relations of determinate negation allow the definition of *consequence relations* that are modally robust in the sense of supporting counterfactual inferences—what show up at the end of *Consciousness* in the form of *laws*. The proposition or property *p* entails *q* just in case everything incompatible with (ruled out or excluded by) *q* is incompatible with (ruled out or excluded by) *p*. For instance having the property **square** entails having the property **polygonal**, because and in the sense that everything materially incompatible with **square** (for instance **circular**) is incompatible with **polygonal**. In this sense, it is *impossible* for something to be square without its also being polygonal. So we can see (though Hegel never makes the point explicitly) that:

3) Material incompatibility relations induce modally robust material consequence relations.

Taking his cue from the role played by the middle term in a classical syllogism, Hegel uses the term "mediation" [Vermittlung] in discussing the *inferential* articulation of contents induced by relations of determinate negation. Thus mediation can be understood in terms of determinate negation.¹⁹³ This is to say that for Hegel schließen is rooted in ausschließen (conclusion in exclusion). Together, these two sorts of relation define what Hegel means by "conceptual" [begrifflich]:

¹⁹³ As can universality, though that is another story. Cf. *Science of Logic* [A.V. Miller, trans. Humanities Press International, 1990, hereafter, *SL*] "...universality is a *form* assumed by the difference, and the determinateness is the *content*. [SL608]

4) To be *conceptually* articulated is just to stand in material relations of incompatibility and (so) consequence (inference).

In this sense, conceptual articulation is a perfectly objective affair. It has nothing obviously or explicitly to do with any *subjective* or *psychological process*. Showing that it nonetheless does have an *implicit* connection to such processes, and what that connection is, is the task of motivating objective idealism (that is, idealism about the objective conceptual structure of the world).

Given this definition, Hegel's *conceptual* realism can be seen as just the form taken by a *modal* realism. There really are modally qualified states of affairs: possibilities and necessities (necessitations being the inferential version of this categorical notion, and conditional possibility being the corresponding weaker conditional modality). Further, without acknowledging them, we cannot make intelligible ordinary descriptive predicates and properties. Again, Hegel will claim that modal realism requires objective idealism.

- Second, I started this story with the idea of how things are—the idea that there is some way the world is. Understanding how things are is grasping a certain sort of *content*. In talking about objectivity and subjectivity in terms of 'truth' and 'certainty', Hegel wants us to start by focusing on this notion of *content* rather than on the *objects* of (claims to) knowledge. One reason to do this, of which Hegel's *Introduction* reminds us, is so our philosophical idiom will not rule out from the beginning as incoherent the possibility that how things are in themselves might also be how they are for some consciousness—that there is a sense of 'content' in which, at least in some cases, truth and certainty may be two different forms taken by the same content. If we start by terminologically committing ourselves to a picture

of consciousness as a *relation* between two sorts of *thing*, subjects and objects, we cut ourselves off from the shift in theoretical perspective that Hegel wants to recommend under the heading of 'idealism', which is my topic here. Talk of subjects and objects comes late in the story, not at the beginning. And when they do officially become a topic, in *Perception*,

5) The concepts subject and object can be defined in terms of determinate negation or material incompatibility.

Both are to be understood as loci or units of account that in a generic sense "repel" or "exclude" incompatibilities. Objects repel objectively incompatible properties (such as **square** and **triangular**), in that one and the same object *cannot* at the same time exhibit both—though they can be exhibited by different objects. And subjects repel subjectively incompatible commitments (for instance, commitment to something being square and commitment to it being circular) in that one and the same subject *ought* not at the same time endorse both (though the same prohibition does not apply to the commitments of different subjects). The different ways in which objects and subjects "repel" or "exclude" them make it clear that incompatibility_{obj} and incompatibility_{subj} are *different* concepts. (Since while one object *cannot* simultaneously exhibit objectively incompatible properties, one subject merely *ought* not simultaneously undertake subjectively incompatible commitments.) The intimate relation between these concepts—the way in which incompatibility_{obj} and incompatibility_{subj} turn out to be two sides of one coin, each intelligible in principle only in relation to the other—is the essence of Hegel's *objective idealism* concerning the relation between the subjective and the objective poles of consciousness.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Note that I will only try to sketch one part of this story. An account of how representational relations can be understood in terms of relations among graspable senses, of how the concept of noumena arises out of relations among *phenomena*, is the story told in Part Two.

III. Holism

The notion of immediacy presupposes determinateness of content, but cannot by itself underwrite it. Determinate content must be articulated by relations of material incompatibility. That realization entails rejecting the semantic atomism that lies at the core of what Wilfrid Sellars would later call the “Myth of the Given,” in a work that opens by invoking “Hegel, that great foe of immediacy.” The concept of immediacy can itself be made intelligible only against a background of mediating relations of exclusion. This is the conclusion of Hegel’s discussion of *Sense Certainty*.¹⁹⁵

Understanding determinate conceptual content in terms of relations of exclusion among such contents commits one, then, to some kind of *semantic holism*. Although earlier thinkers outside the empiricist tradition (especially Kant) had dipped their toes in the water, Hegel is the first thinker explicitly to take the plunge and try to think through rigorously the consequences of semantic holism. But what exactly is he committed to? To begin with,

6) We can distinguish two grades of holistic commitment:

- *Weak* individuation holism: Articulation by relations of material incompatibility is *necessary* for determinate contentfulness (for instance, of states of affairs and properties, on the objective side, and propositions and predicates on the subjective side).

¹⁹⁵ But the thought is, of course, pervasive in Hegel’s writings. Thus for instance “Immediacy in general proceeds only from mediation, and must therefore pass over into mediation. Or, in other words, the determinateness of the content contained in the definition, because it is determinateness, is not merely an immediate, but is mediated by its opposite; consequently definition can apprehend its subject matter only through the opposite determination and must therefore pass into *division*.” [SL800]

- *Strong* individuational holism: Articulation by relations of material incompatibility is *sufficient*—all there is available to define it—for determinate contentfulness (for instance, of states of affairs and properties, on the objective side, and propositions and predicates on the subjective side).

Hegel is clearly committed to the weaker claim. So, for instance, in a characteristic expression introducing it in the discussion of *Perception*, Hegel says of "differentiated, determinate properties" that "*many* such properties are established [gesetzt] simultaneously, one being the negative of another."¹⁹⁶ *One* property can be understood as determinate only by understanding *many other* properties—those incompatible with it—as similarly determinate. But is he also committed to the stronger form?

There are reasons to think that he is. Standard contemporary ways of thinking of conceptual content in terms of the exclusion of possibilities—paradigmatically information theoretic and possible worlds accounts—treat the space of possibilities partitioned by such a content as fixed and given in advance of any such partition. By contrast to both, the line of thought Hegel develops here does *not* take it that the possibilities are available conceptually antecedently to the possible (indeed, actual¹⁹⁷) contents of messages or claims, or that the properties are already sitting there intelligibly determinate *before* the relations of exclusion among them have been considered. For what would that determinateness consist in? If immediacy *as* immediacy is *indeterminate*, it seems that the relations of exclusion must be what their determinateness consists in. What might be called "asymmetric relative individuation" of one sort of item with respect to another is a relatively straightforward matter. Thus if I

¹⁹⁶ [M113].

¹⁹⁷ See the discussion of this point in the previous chapter.

understand the property **red** as selecting out of the set of objects a privileged subset, namely those that exhibit that property, I can identify and individuate another property, **not-red**, entirely in terms of its contrast with the original property. I understand it also as selecting out of the set of objects a privileged subset, defined in terms of the other, namely, the complement of the first. But this is not what Hegel offers us. He is committed to *symmetric* relative individuation, in which a whole *set* or *system* of determinate contents—comprising **red, blue, yellow**, and so on—is ‘posited’ at once, each individuated by its relations to (its strong differences from) the others.¹⁹⁸ If such a view does not entail strong individuation holism, a story will have to be told about why not.

The second reason to attribute to Hegel commitment to strong individuation semantic holism is the nature of the transition from *Perception* to *Force and Understanding* that is driven by making explicit the holism that turns out to be implicit in understanding properties as identified and individuated by the relations of determinate negation and mediation in which they stand to one another (and, at a higher level, to the objects ultimately defined as centers of exclusion of them). Thus even in its first appearance, where the concept of force is understood as dividing into forces playing the roles of soliciting and solicited, we are told:

[T]hese moments are not divided into two independent extremes offering each other only an opposite extreme: their essence rather consists simply and solely in this, that each *is* solely through the other, and what each thus is it immediately no

¹⁹⁸ (Cf. §42Z of the Encyclopedia.) Worse, Hegel insists that we cannot help ourselves to the category object in defining properties, since the categories object and property themselves stand in a symmetric holistic relation, each in principle intelligible only in terms of the other.

longer is, since it *is* the other. They have thus, in fact, no substance of their own, which might support and maintain them.¹⁹⁹

At this point, relations to other items of the same category are not merely *one* necessary element in the individuation of the items being considered. It seems that they are all there is. The whole discussion of *Consciousness* leads up to putting on the table the final holistic conception of the conceptual that Hegel calls "infinity". At the very end of that part of the *Phenomenology* Hegel says:

Infinity... in which whatever is determined in one way or another...is rather the opposite of this determinateness, this no doubt has been from the start the soul of all that has gone before.²⁰⁰

The conception of the conceptual as "infinite" is the axis around which Hegel's systematic thought revolves. Grasping it is the primary goal towards which the exposition of the whole *Logic* is directed. In the discussion at the end of *Force and Understanding*, the "Notion of inner difference,"²⁰¹ contrasting with the inadequate atomistic conception of "absolute" difference, is repeatedly equated with infinity. In fact, the term is introduced for the first time as characterizing what

is itself and its opposite in one unity. Only thus is it difference as *inner* difference, or difference as *its own self*, or difference as an *infinity*.²⁰²

Inner difference is material incompatibility among items understood to be the items they are solely in virtue of standing in those relations of necessary mutual exclusion. Inner difference is

¹⁹⁹ [M141].

²⁰⁰ [M 163].

²⁰¹ [M161].

²⁰² [M161].

a *difference* which is no *difference*, or only a difference of what is *self-same*, and its essence is unity. The two distinguished moments both subsist [bestehen]; they are *implicit* and are *opposites in themselves*, i.e. each is the opposite of itself; each has its 'other' within it and they are only one unity.²⁰³

Understanding such a holistic unity requires “the distinguishing of what is *not* to be distinguished, or the *unity* of what is distinguished.”²⁰⁴

The holistic successor conception to a world of *facts*—namely, the world as having the structure of *infinity*—emerges as the lesson of the discussion of the constitutive holistic interrelations of laws.

That the simple character of law is infinity means, according to what we have found, a) that it is self-*identical*, but is also in itself *different*; or it is the selfsame which repels itself from itself or sunders itself into two...b) What is thus dirempted [Entzweite], which constitutes the parts...exhibits itself as a stable existence...but c) through the Notion of inner difference, these unlike and indifferent moments...are a *difference* which is no *difference* or only a difference of what is *self-same*, and its essence is unity...The two distinguished moments both subsist; they are *implicit* and are *opposites in themselves*, i.e. each is the opposite of itself; each has its 'other' within it and they are only one unity.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ [M161].

²⁰⁴ [M168].

²⁰⁵ [M161].

We are now to think of the whole as having its differences within it, as an articulating structure essential both to the constitution of the whole and to the constitution of its "self-differentiating" components.

Those components can be thought of as particular facts, particular laws, and general laws, provided we do not forget that these cannot be understood as atomistic elements intelligible independently of and antecedently to consideration of the modal relations of exclusion and inclusion in which they stand to one another. If we keep firmly in mind that the topic is a holistically understood system of determinately contentful elements that are determinately contentful, *conceptually* contentful, just because and insofar as they are articulated by relations of material incompatibility, and hence material inferential relations, we can at least begin to see what Hegel is trying to get across in passages such as this one:

This simple infinity, or the absolute Notion...whose omnipresence is neither disturbed nor interrupted by any difference, but rather is itself every difference, as also their supersession; it pulsates within itself but does not move, inwardly vibrates, yet is at rest. It is self-*identical*, for its differences are tautological; they are differences that are none...that very self-identicalness is an inner difference.

These *sundered moments* are thus *in and for themselves* each an opposite—*of an other*; thus in each moment the 'other' is at the same time expressed; or each is not the opposite of an 'other' but only a *pure opposite*; and so each is therefore in its own self the opposite of itself. In other words, it is not an opposite at all, but is purely for itself, a pure, self-identical essence that has no difference in it....But in saying that the unity is an abstraction, that is, is only one of the opposed moments

it is already implied that it is the dividing of itself; for if the unity is a *negative*, is *opposed* to something, then it is *eo ipso* posited as that which has an antithesis within it. The different moments of *self-sundering* and of *becoming self-identical* are therefore likewise only this movement of *self-supersession*; for since the self-identical, which is supposed first to sunder itself or become its opposite, is an abstraction, or is *already itself* a sundered moment, its self-sundering is therefore a supersession of what it is, and therefore the supersession of its dividedness. Its *becoming self-identical* is equally a self-sundering; what becomes identical with itself thereby opposes itself to its self-sundering; i.e. it thereby puts itself on one side, or rather *becomes a sundered moment*.²⁰⁶

The concept of infinity in play here is clearly a holistic one. But should we understand it as holist in the *strong* sense? It turns out that there is a real question as to whether we even *can* so understand it.

IV. Conceptual Difficulties of Strong Holism

For Hegel also realizes, what the difficulty of his language perhaps makes manifest: it remains far from evident just how to understand such holistic claims in detail. We will see that one of the primary tasks driving Hegel's exposition—in particular, the crucial transition from

²⁰⁶ [M162].

Consciousness to Self-Consciousness—is unpacking the commitments implicit in holist conceptions of content, and assembling the conceptual raw materials needed to explain them.

Strong individuation semantic holism asks us to think of conceptual contents—that is, for Hegel, whatever is in any coherent sense *determinate*—as forming a *holistic relational structure*. Such a structure would consist of a domain and set of relations of material exclusion defined on that domain. But, further, it asks us to understand the domain elements themselves as constituted by the relations of material exclusion it stands in to other domain elements. The relata are in a sense dissolved into the relations between them. And at this point we have a chicken-and-egg problem: the relations are individuated by their relata, and the relata by the relations they stand in. But relations between *what*, exactly? The intelligibility of the relations themselves is threatened. Can we really understand relations of incompatibility without any prior grip on what is incompatible? How does the whole thing get off the ground? Once we have eschewed *asymmetric* relative individuation in favor of the symmetric variety, the strong version of holism threatens to dissolve into unintelligibility. What is supposed to be the very structure of determinateness itself seems wholly *indeterminate* and unconstrained. The strongly distinguished items are defined in terms of their strong differences. There is an evident danger of circularity involved in trying to individuate some items in terms of others when the situation is symmetric. For in that case those others to which one appeals are themselves only individuated in terms of their relations to the so-far-unindividuated items with which one began. The sort of structure being described threatens to be "unendlich" in the sense that we chase our tails endlessly in search of some firm distinctions and distinguished items to appeal to in getting the process of identification and individuation started.

I think there is not just a *prima facie* problem in making strong individuational semantic holism intelligible, but one that is unsolvable in principle.

7) Strong individuational semantic holism is not a coherent position.

If we are to make good sense of Hegel, we must come to see that, in spite of the ways in which his language repeatedly invites us to attribute this view to him, he is in fact *not* committed to this sort of strong holism. But we must also, then, see what it is about the view he *does* endorse that makes these forms of expression tempting. Hegel's understanding of *determinateness*—whether thought of objectively, as a matter of how things really are, or subjectively, in terms of our grasp of how things might really be—in terms of modally robust *exclusion* entails a certain kind of *holism*. And I have indicated that I think Hegel's *idealism* should be understood as motivated in the *Phenomenology* by being revealed as an implicit presupposition of the intelligibility of that holism. In evaluating the philosophical credentials and significance of Hegel's idealism, the argument for this claim is of the utmost importance. So it is worth some care to get it right.

V. A Bad Argument

Unfortunately, the texts that discuss this move—basically, those that describe the rationale for the transition from the consideration of the objects of consciousness, in *Consciousness*, to the subjects of consciousness, in *Self-Consciousness*—invite a reading in which only a very weak argument is visible. For Hegel emphasizes from the beginning that consciousness itself must be thought of as having a certain kind of holistic structure: it is a unity

that essentially consists in the relation between its distinct subjective and objective poles (what appear for instance as "the immediately self-differentiating moments within perception"²⁰⁷ [M111]). And it can *look* as though what he is saying is that once we discover the holistic character of the *objects* of consciousness, we see that they resemble consciousness itself in this respect, so that consciousness of everything should be understood on the model of consciousness of objects that themselves have the holistic structure characteristic of consciousness—that is, that we should understand consciousness generally on the model of *self*-consciousness. I'll call this the "analogical argument from holism" for the sort of idealism that models consciousness on self-consciousness, thereby underwriting the expository transition from *Consciousness* to *Self-Consciousness*. Thus in the penultimate paragraph of *Consciousness*, after the discussion of "infinity" we find this summary of what appears to be the rationale for moving at this point to concern with *self*-consciousness:

Since this Notion of infinity is an object for consciousness, the latter is consciousness of a difference that is no less *immediately* canceled; consciousness is for its own self, it is a distinguishing of that which contains no difference [Unterscheiden des Ununterschiedenen], or *self-consciousness*. I distinguish myself from myself, and in doing so I am directly aware that what is distinguished from myself is not different. I, the selfsame being, repel [abstoßen] myself from myself; but what is posited as distinct from me, or as unlike me, is immediately in being so distinguished not a distinction for me. It is true that consciousness of an 'other', of an object in general, is itself necessarily *self-consciousness*... consciousness of itself in its otherness...[N]ot

²⁰⁷ [M111].

only is consciousness of a thing possible only for a self-consciousness, but that self-consciousness alone is the truth of those shapes.²⁰⁸

The object of consciousness has the holistic relational structure Hegel calls "infinity". This is a structure of differences (exclusions) that are canceled or superseded ("aufgehoben") in that the identity or unity of the differentiated items is understood as consisting in those relations of reciprocal exclusion. But consciousness itself is such a structure. So consciousness of objects is consciousness of something that has the same structure as consciousness. It is therefore structurally like consciousness of *selves* rather than objects. Generically, then, it is to be understood as self-consciousness.

This is a dreadful argument. If it were intended to show the *identity* of consciousness and self-consciousness (if that were the intent of the 'is' in the claim "consciousness of an 'other', of an object in general, is itself necessarily *self-consciousness*"), it would have the same form as what has been called the "schizophrenic syllogism":

Men die.

Grass dies.

∴ Men are grass.

That is, it would illegitimately infer identity from mere similarity. On the other hand, if it is intended merely to show a structural analogy, the situation seems entirely symmetrical. Why should self-consciousness be privileged because of its holistic character as the fixed end of

²⁰⁸ [M164].

analogy on the basis of which to understand the holistic character of the objects of ordinary consciousness, rather than the other way around? In any case, the analogy does not seem very strong. On the face of it, the relation between subjects and objects in consciousness is asymmetric: there cannot be subjects of consciousness without objects, but the very same things that can be the objects of consciousness (e.g. the physical forces theoretically postulated by natural science) can be there without subjects to be conscious of them. Of course they are not there *qua* objects of consciousness, but so what? The asymmetry would still seem to be real. Hegel *might* mean to deny that there is any asymmetry of this sort between the status of subjects and objects of consciousness, but if so he would hardly be entitled to *assume* such a view in arguing for an idealist conclusion. And there does not seem to be any corresponding asymmetry in the holistic relational structure he has discerned as implicit in the determinateness of the objective world. (One could try to work one up from the asymmetry underlined by the discussion of the inverted world—the asymmetry, namely, between the actual facts about what objects have what properties, on the one hand, and the merely possible instantiations of properties by those same objects that they, as determinate, exclude. But this seems importantly different from the subject-object asymmetry.) If this is right, then the analogy between the underlying holistic structure of the objective world arrived at by the end of *Consciousness* and the holistic structure consciousness is supposed to have would depend on a very thin and abstract respect of similarity—a slender reed on which to build an idealist edifice.

Things would look, if anything, worse if Hegel is relying on his terminology to shore up the comparison. Thus one might seek to appeal to the formula that determinate objective content (say, of a property) is a kind of "identity in difference", and then use the same words to describe

consciousness. But the mere fact that the same phrase could be used about both surely counts for very little here, especially given the differences just pointed to. Again, the fact that Hegel can say that "in general, to be for itself and to be in relation to an other constitutes the essence of the content,"²⁰⁹ and that one could also say that consciousness was both "for itself and in relation to an other" (i.e. essentially involved consciousness of itself and of its object) may just show the flexibility of this somewhat figurative way of speaking, rather than evidencing any very illuminating similarity. Calling the relations something stands in its "being for others" would be a pretty cheap way to buy the right to model the objects of consciousness on the subjects of consciousness, especially in the context of a social theory of self-consciousness, which explains being-for-self in terms of being-for-others. The point is not that using the same terminology for both cases cannot be earned, or that it cannot be illuminating. The point is that it must be earned in order to be illuminating. At the *end* of the story, we may see why it is useful to talk this way. But it is hard to see how these tropes by themselves can move that story along. The mere fact that it is possible to talk about the objects of consciousness and consciousness itself in terms that are so generic that we say some of the same things about both is a very weak rationale for the expository transition to *Self-Consciousness*. The most it would provide is an excuse for a shift of topic, along the lines of saying "Now, let's look at self-consciousness, since it has come up in the story...". But it would provide no argument at all for any sort of interesting or controversial idealism, and no clarification of such a thesis. If this sort of argument—really a verbal slide that conflates two quite different points, one wholly on the side of objective content (facts, objects, properties), the other about the relation between such contents and knowers—were the best we

²⁰⁹ [M 134].

could find Hegel presenting at this crucial juncture in his account, there would be no reason to take his idealism seriously.

VI. Objective Relations and Subjective Processes

A good place to start is with a distinction between inferential *processes* and inferential *relations* that emerges first in thinking about logic. Gilbert Harman has argued provocatively that there are no such thing as rules of deductive inference.²¹⁰ For if there were, they would presumably say things like "From p and *if p then q* , infer q ." But that would be a bad rule. One might already have much better evidence against q than one had for either p or the conditional. In that case, one should give one of them up. What deductive logic really tells us is not to believe all of p , *if p then q* , and $\sim q$. But it does not tell us what to *do* inferentially. It merely specifies some deductive *relations* of entailment and incompatibility, which *constrain* what we should do without *determining* it. Inference is a *process*; implication is a *relation*. Nothing but confusion can result from running together the quite different concepts of inferential processes and inferential relations. What I will call "the Harman point" is

8) One must distinguish, and consider the relations between, inferential *relations* (and hence relational structures²¹¹) and inferential *processes*.

He makes the point in connection with formal deductive logic, but it has broader applicability.

In particular, Hegel's term "Schluß" exhibits just this relation/process ambiguity. It is usually translated "syllogism", on the perfectly reasonable grounds that "Schluß" is the term historically

²¹⁰ "Logic and Reasoning," *Synthese*. 1984; **60**, pp. 107-128.

²¹¹ To begin with, grounded ones.

used in Germany to discuss Aristotelean syllogistic inferences. And there are places, particularly in the *Science of Logic* discussion of the forms of syllogism, where this is the only proper translation. But the term means *inference* more generally. And while it is clear that sometimes he is talking about the relations between the different elements of a classical syllogism—for instance, about having the status or playing the role of a middle term—as we shall see, it is also clear that sometimes he is talking about the *movement* from the premises to the conclusion.²¹² (Related terms, such as "mediation" [Vermittlung] take similar double senses.) Indeed, one of his major concerns, I shall argue, is with the *relation* between inferential relations and inferential practices or processes.

As we have seen, Hegel has a deeper notion than that of material inference, namely material *incompatibility*. The only sorts of inference Hegel considers as contributing to determinate conceptual content are the modally robust ones that derive from relations of exclusion. Taking material *inferential* relations (mediation, schließen) to be grounded in material *incompatibility* relations (determinate negation, ausschließen) suggests a generalization of the Harman point, to relational structures defined by *exclusion*, and (so) by *necessitation*. Hegel's version of the Harman point accordingly is something like

9) In thinking about determinateness in terms of material incompatibility, and so in terms of inference, we should also distinguish between *relations* and *processes*.

²¹² This fact is sometimes obscured for those reading the *Phenomenology* in English translation, since "syllogism", unlike "Schluß", doesn't have a naturally associated verb form. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel often explicitly uses the phrase "Verlauf der Schlüsse" [e.g. at WL II 597].

I think it is helpful to construe the distinction between the *objective* incompatibility of situations, properties, states of affairs, or the determinate elements of an "infinite" holistic conceptual relational structure, on the one hand, and the *subjective* incompatibility of commitments, on the other hand, on the Harmanian model of *relations* and *processes* (or practices). The *process* on the *subjective* side of *certainty* that corresponds to the *relation* of incompatibility of facts or properties on the *objective* side of *truth* is *resolving* incompatible commitments, by revising or relinquishing one of them. As a version of the point was put above, *objectively* incompatible properties *cannot* characterize the same object (objectively incompatible facts cannot characterize the same world), while *subjectively* incompatible commitments merely *ought not* to characterize the same subject. Any case where they do is a case of *error*, the acknowledgment of which (as Hegel has argued in the *Introduction*) is what taking one's commitments to be answerable to an objective world (in the sense constitutive of treating them *as* representations of such a world) consists in. But to acknowledge an error, that is, to acknowledge the incompatibility of two of one's commitments, is to acknowledge an obligation to *do* something, to *alter* one's commitments so as to remove or repair the incompatibility.

I think that the idealism that emerges from the expository transition from *Consciousness* to *Self-Consciousness* claims, broadly, that one cannot understand the relations of *objective* incompatibility that articulate the conceptual relational structure in virtue of which the objective world is *determinate*, unless one understands the *processes* and *practices* constituting the acknowledgment of the *subjective* incompatibility of commitments that are thereby treated as representations of such a world—in the sense of being answerable to it for their correctness.

Such a view about the relation between subjective cognitive *processes* and the *relations* that articulate potential objects of knowledge involves extending the Harman point along another dimension. It requires not just that there be a *distinction* between conceptual relations (paradigmatically, material inferential and incompatibility relations) and conceptual processes (of belief and concept revision), but further, that grasp of the relations *consists* in engaging in the corresponding processes. This view is a more specific version of

10) Conceptual pragmatism: grasp of a concept (conceptual content) is a *practical* capacity, mastery of a practice, or the capacity to undergo or engage in a process; it is the capacity to *do something*.

(Sellars propounds a linguistic version of conceptual pragmatism, in claiming that grasp of a concept is always mastery of the use of a word.) Applied to the case in hand, understanding the objective relation of determinate negation or material incompatibility, which provides the most basic structure of the conceptual, is acknowledging in practice a subjective obligation to engage in the process of resolving incompatible commitments.²¹³

Read back into the very simple Harman case with which we began, endorsement of conceptual pragmatism supports a stronger claim than Harman makes: the claim that one does not understand the concept of deductive implication *relations* unless one understands them *as* constraints on inferential *processes* of rationally altering one's beliefs. This the idea that what it is for the relations in question to be *implication* relations just is for them to play a certain role in constraining rational belief change. Endorsing this thought is moving beyond the original point. For Harman does not say that what it *is* for one proposition to stand in a relation of implying or

²¹³ As Hegel says at. Encyclopedia § 555: “The subjective consciousness of the absolute spirit is essentially and intrinsically a process...”

entailing another just *is* for certain inferential moves and not others to be correct or appropriate (and vice versa). He does not take the process of grasping inferential relations to be an essential defining element of what those relations are.²¹⁴

VII. Sense Dependence, Reference Dependence, and Objective Idealism

It will be helpful here to introduce some definitions.

11) Concept P is *sense dependent* on concept Q just in case one cannot count as having grasped P unless one counts as grasping Q.

12) Concept P is *reference dependent* on concept Q just in case P cannot apply to something unless Q applies to something.²¹⁵

A paradigmatic sense dependence claim is Sellars' classic argument in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" that one cannot master the use of 'looks' talk without having mastered the use of 'is' talk. The concepts nail and hammer may be related like this: one cannot understand what a nail is—something meant to be driven by a hammer—without understanding what a hammer is.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ This relation should be understood as symmetrical and reciprocal: one also does not understand the idea of purportedly representational commitments, and so incompatibility_{subj}, unless one also understands the idea of a determinate world whose determinateness means that it can be other than as it is represented. This is an idea articulated by relations of incompatibility_{obj}.

²¹⁵ This might be called 'coarse' reference dependence, which claims only that if one property is instantiated somewhere in a world, the other is instantiated in that same world. 'Fine' reference dependence would then claim that if some object instantiates the one property, *that same object* instantiates the other. teacher and student are (given some straightforward stipulations) related in the first way, while square and rectangle are related in the second.

²¹⁶ Since hammers are meant to be used to do many things besides driving nails, the relationship would not be reciprocal in this case.

One important point to keep in mind is

13) Sense dependence does not entail reference dependence.

That is, even if the concept nail is sense dependent on the concept hammer, it would not follow that it was impossible for there to *be* nails without there being hammers to drive them. (Maybe the nails were invented first, or all the hammers were destroyed.²¹⁷) The point is clearest if we look at *intensions* and *extensions* in a possible worlds framework. Consider a property or intension defined by a *de re* comparison: being more massive than the Earth's sun (in fact) is. (Calling it a "*de re*" comparison just marks the familiar distinction of scope: in evaluating its application, one *first* determines the mass of the Earth's sun in *this* world, and *then* compares it to the mass of bodies in other possible worlds.) Now I take it that this intension is intelligible only in the context of another: the mass of the Earth's sun. No-one who did not understand the latter could count as understanding the former. (Of course, understanding the concept does not require knowing what the mass of the Earth's sun is in the sense of being able to specify a number of kilograms or pounds.) And this is not just a point about understanding. It is a point about the intensions themselves: one is defined in terms of (as a function of) the other. But it is clear that there could be stars that have the property **being more massive than the Earth's sun** even though they are in possible worlds in which the Earth and its sun never formed. That is, the dependent intension can be instantiated even though the intension it depends upon is not.

²¹⁷ I'm not sure whether Heidegger was confused on this point in Division One of *Being and Time*, but certainly some of the commentators on the "equipmental involvements" that structure *Zuhandensein* have failed clearly to distinguish the two claims I am calling "sense dependence" and "reference dependence".

Another example: the property **being produced by a reliable belief-forming mechanism** is conceptually dependent on that of **being a true belief**, because to be a reliable belief-forming mechanism is to produce beliefs that are likely to be true. But a belief can exhibit the dependent property without exhibiting the property it is conceptually dependent on—it can be produced by a reliable mechanism without being true.

From the fact that P_2 is defined as an intension that is a function of the intension of P_1 , it simply does not follow that wherever P_2 is instantiated, so is P_1 . Definitional dependence of intensions does not entail *de facto* dependence of extensions.

If one first extends the Harman point from formal logic, and applies it also to material inferential and incompatibility relations, and then strengthens it into commitment to a kind of conceptual pragmatism, what one gets is a characteristic kind of *reciprocal sense dependence claim*:

14) One can only understand the concept of a determinate *objective* world to the extent to which one understands *subjective* process of acknowledging error—what Hegel calls ‘experience’--which is treating two commitments one finds oneself with as *incompatible*.

I think one should understand the strand in Hegel's idealism we might call *objective idealism* as codifying this genus of reciprocal sense dependence between the realm of truth and that of certainty. Given Hegel's most basic concept, a slightly more articulated version is:

15) Objective Idealism: The concepts of incompatibility_{obj} and incompatibility_{subj}, and therefore the concepts of an objectively determinate world, on the one hand, and of error,

and experience—which characterize the process of resolving incompatible commitments—on the other, are reciprocally sense dependent.

For Hegel, the conceptually fundamental reciprocal sense dependence is that between incompatibility_{obj} and incompatibility_{subj}, epitomized in the different senses in which objects and subjects "repel" incompatibilities, respectively of properties and of commitments.²¹⁸ But the force of the claim is probably clearer for us if we consider its applicability to what Hegel takes pains in *Consciousness* to show are phenomena definable in terms of those incompatibilities: object and property, fact, and law (or necessity).

In fact, these are three examples of objective idealist theses that I think can and should be defended on their own merits by contemporary conceptual pragmatists.²¹⁹

- First, the concepts singular term and object are reciprocally sense dependent. One cannot understand either without at least implicitly understanding the other, and the basic relations between them. Only people who know how to use singular terms can pick out objects and distinguish them from properties, situations, or states of affairs. And one cannot master the use of singular terms without understanding that they stand for objects. Kant's version of idealism depends in part on his understanding of the relation between our judgments being about objects and their containing (directly or indirectly) singular representations. Frege (who would be no less horrified by the appellation "idealist" than any of our contemporaries—but who also had perhaps no less flat-footed an understanding of what the

²¹⁸ Though both of these structures are eventually aufgehoben in favor of something even more holistic, the 'infinite' holistic incompatibility relational structure of the end of *Consciousness*, and situated, embodied communities, by the end of *Reason*.

²¹⁹ I have defended the first two explicitly in *Making It Explicit*, and also there set out some of the raw materials that would need to be assembled to back up the third, Sellarsian claim.

German idealists were after) argues vigorously and cogently for at least one direction of sense dependence, of object on singular term (that is, the direction that is most important for idealists), in the *Grundlagen*.

- Second, the concepts asserting and fact are reciprocally sense dependent. That facts can be the contents of assertions, judgments, beliefs—that they are claimable, thinkable, believable—is an essential feature of them. One does not know what a fact is unless one understands that they can be stated. This line of thought is opposed to an explanatory strategy that would start with objects, and try to construe facts as arrangements of objects—what might be called the "tinkertoy" picture of facts. One would then go on to understand sentences as a special kind of complex representation, one that represented not objects, but objects as characterized by properties and standing in relations. (The *Tractatus* is often misread as promulgating a view of this sort.) I think such an approach is doomed to failure at making propositional contents as such intelligible. The evident difficulties this strategy has with modal facts, probabilistic facts, and normative facts, for instance, are merely the surface manifestations of the deeper difficulties in making the notion of proposition or fact intelligible in a context in which one is not also taking into account what it is to use an expression as a declarative sentence. My aim here, however, is not to argue for this sense dependence claim, but merely to place it relative to a contrary approach to things, and to suggest that it is not a view that ought to be dismissed out of hand.
- Third, the concepts necessity and law, on the one hand, and counterfactually robust inference on the other, are reciprocally sense dependent. Sellars has argued for the more controversial direction of sense dependence, on the basis of his conceptual pragmatism: one has not grasped the difference between lawlike regularities and mere regularities unless one

understands that the former, but not the latter, support counterfactual reasoning. (Hegel's version is the connection between law and explanation, which stand to each other roughly as do the concepts perceptible property and acknowledging error.)

In assessing these claims about the sense dependence of concepts that articulate our understanding of the structure of the objective world on concepts pertaining to our cognitive and practical activities, it is important to keep firmly in mind that sense dependence does not entail reference dependence (claim (13) above). The claim is *not* that if there were no cognitive activity—no resolving of subjectively incompatible commitments, no use of singular terms, no asserting, no counterfactual reasoning—then there would be no determinate way the world is, no objects, facts, or laws. There is not the slightest reason to believe that Hegel thought any such thing. Certainly making the sense dependence claims that I take to constitute objective idealism does not commit him to such an idea.

It may be helpful in clarifying this crucial feature of idealism to focus on a less controversial case that is somewhat analogous to objective idealism, in that it involves the sense dependence of properties of objective things on subjective activities. Consider *response dependent* properties. By this I mean properties defined by their relation to the responses of something else. The general form of such a definition might be this:

An object has property *P* just in case a creature of kind *K* *would* (in circumstances of kind *C*) respond to it with a response of kind *R*.

To say that *P* is a response dependent property in this sense entails that it is sense dependent (by definition) on other concepts, notably *R*, the response, (as well as *K* and *C*). One could not

understand what property *P* is unless one also understands what the response *R* is. It doesn't matter for our purposes here just what properties are properly thought of as being response dependent in this sense. It is plausible that the property **humorous** or **funny** is a property of this sort; a remark or event is humorous or funny just in case the right people (those with a sense of humor) are disposed in appropriate circumstances to *take* it to be funny, that is, to laugh at it. Some have thought that **beautiful** is a response dependent property. The notion of response dependence has also been forwarded as an analysis of secondary quality concepts picking out properties such as **red**: to be red just is to be such that properly sighted creatures respond to it in a certain way, by having a certain kind of experience, by its *looking* red to them.²²⁰ Regardless of whether any of these particular potentially philosophically puzzling sorts of properties are best thought of as response dependent, the concept of response dependent properties is clearly a coherent one. And it should be equally clear that it does *not* follow from a response dependent definition of the form above that in a world that lacks creatures of kind *K*, responses of kind *R*, or circumstances of kind *C*, nothing has the property *P*. For things might still have the dispositional property (counterfactually, in the cases imagined), that if they *were* placed in circumstances *C*, and there *were* creatures of kind *K*, those creatures *would* produce responses of kind *R*. Even if response-dependent analyses of the sort gestured at above were correct for concepts such as beautiful and red, it would not follow that there were no beautiful sunsets or red things before there were creatures to respond to them as such, or that there are not such things in worlds that are never shared with such creatures. In the same way, and for the same reason, the objective idealist subjective-objective sense dependence claim does *not* entail that there would be no

²²⁰ Of course, those who are sufficiently impressed by Sellars' analysis of the relation between **looks-red** and **is-red**, in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," will not be much tempted by such an account. But a more sophisticated analysis of secondary quality concepts is available to them. I discuss one in "Non-inferential Knowledge, Perceptual Experience, and Secondary Qualities: Placing McDowell's Empiricism," in *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, Nicholas H. Smith (ed.), Routledge 2002.

objects, facts, laws, or (to sum these all up in Hegel's master concept) objective incompatibilities (and hence a determinate objective world) unless and until there were singular term uses, assertions, practices of drawing conclusions from counterfactual situations, or activities of attempting to resolve incompatible commitments. Such a claim *would* be crazy (or at least, both obviously and demonstrably false). But no claim of that sort is a consequence of objective idealism as here adumbrated.

VIII. Beyond Strong Holism: a Model

With these conceptual raw material in hand, we are in a position to be somewhat clearer about individuation holism. Earlier I distinguished two grades of holistic commitment: according to the weaker one, relations among holistically individuated items are *necessary* for them to be determinate, and according to the stronger one, they are *sufficient*. But now we can ask: should Hegel's holism—whether understood as strong or as weak—be understood as a *sense* dependence claim, or a *reference* dependence claim? Hegel's answer is clear:

16)) Individuation holism is a reciprocal sense dependence claim.

Understanding it as a reciprocal *reference* dependence claim would be making the mistake of the First Inverted World²²¹: thinking that because an object's being determinate is intelligible only in terms of its exhibiting properties that are each themselves determinate in virtue of their modally robust exclusion of other, strongly contrasting properties, that therefore where one property is possessed by an object, the contrasting ones must also be possessed by that or other objects.

²²¹ [M157-160].

The conception of the Inverted World is what results if one mistakenly thinks that because the exclusive contrast between being positively charged and being negatively charged is essential to each being the determinate electrical property that it is, that therefore in saying that one thing is actually positively charged one must implicitly be claiming that some other, corresponding thing is actually negatively charged. Hegel invokes this flat-footed way of misconstruing the significance of the holism that follows from his understanding of what determinateness consists in—in a portion of his text that many have found puzzling—in order to mark the necessity for a more nuanced construal of just what that holism does involve.

Notice that on this account,

17) Objective idealism is itself the assertion of a reciprocal sense dependence relation, and hence a kind of *holism*.

The looming problem we have identified concerns *strong* individuation holism: the case where *all* there is to appeal to in individuating elements of a holistic relational system are the relations they stand in to each other. The examples I offered of clearly intelligible sense dependence without reference dependence, where one intension is a function of another (paradigmatically as in response dependent properties) did not involve *reciprocal*, but only *asymmetric* sense dependence. One intension is taken as already specified, apart from its relations to others. Strong holism asks us to do without such antecedent, independent individuation of the items that stand in sense dependent relations of modally robust exclusion. And my claim was: without antecedent relata, we cannot really understand the relations (and so the relata). As we will see, immediacy plays a crucial role in Hegel's distinctive kind of holism. So in the end, it is a

distinctive kind of *weak*, not *strong* holism, that characterizes the “infinite” relational structures within which alone anything can be understood as having determinate conceptual content. which is accordingly a version of the weak, not strong sort. The passages that seem to commit him to strong holism should be understood rather as corresponding to one (ultimately inadequate) phase in the process of grasping or understanding a holistic relational structure.

For, as conceptual pragmatism would lead us to expect, making holistic relational structures intelligible requires engaging in a fairly specific sort of *process*. The relations between the holistic relational structure and that process can then be seen both to instantiate and to support the objective idealism that results from extending and supplementing the Harman point. This, I think, is the ultimate shape of Hegel’s argument for objective idealism in the first part of the *Phenomenology*: *determinateness* requires a kind of *holism*, and that holism is intelligible only on the hypothesis of objective *idealism*.

Here is one way to think systematically about holistically individuated *roles* that items play with respect to a set of relations: Start with some already identified and individuated *signs*, say proposition letters. These are things we can immediately *distinguish*, that is, noninferentially discriminate or tell apart. But initially, we assume nothing about their content. That they are discriminably different is enough.²²² Next, we look at relations among them. As an example,

²²² Doing this need not be assuming that the notion of immediate difference is autonomously intelligible. There will always be some actual content to the difference: the sign designs exhibit incompatible shapes, for instance. But we can abstract from that content and employ in our reasoning only some of its consequences: the mere difference of the signs. As Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia Logic* [§ 115]: “Abstraction is...the transformation of something inherently concrete into this form of elementary simplicity. And this may be done in two ways. Either we may neglect a part of the multiple features which are found in the concrete thing (by what is called analysis) and select only one of them; or, neglecting their variety, we may concentrate the multiple character into one.”

consider the relation two sign kinds p and q stand in if in some community, tokening both of them is subjected to a distinctive sanction.²²³

One can then define the *roles* played by signs with respect to that relation—for instance, by associating with each sentence letter the set of sentence letters that stand in the first, practical-incompatibility, relation to it. We can think of such a set of incompatible sentence letters as a kind of incompatibility *content* that is *expressed by* the sentence letter it is associated with. And then we can define *new* relations on these roles or contents that are induced naturally by the relations on the signs they comprise. For instance, content-incompatibility relations among the roles will shadow practical incompatibility among the underlying signs. But we can also define *entailment* relations among the contents, by \underline{p} (the content expressed by ' p ') entails \underline{q} just in case \underline{q} is a subset of \underline{p} .

Roles defined this way are *abstracted* from the underlying signs in a way somewhat analogous to orthodox mathematical abstraction by the formation of equivalence classes.²²⁴ Such abstract roles are identified and individuated entirely by relations. If we squint just enough not to distinguish the two levels of relations (the latter definable entirely in terms of the former), then the roles would appear to be identified and individuated wholly by the relations *they themselves* stand in to *each other*. That is the paradoxical formulation of strong holism. But if we do keep track of the (somewhat subtle) distinction of levels, we see that there need be nothing

²²³ The sanction might be being (counted as being) *obliged to do* something that one would not otherwise be obliged to do—for instance, to alter the conditions under which one is disposed to produce tokenings of other signs in the domain in systematically (systematizably) constrained ways. In this example, the relations are generically socially instituted normative relations of relative practical incompatibility of act kinds. But this is *just* an example (though not chosen at random).

²²⁴ Abstraction in the usual sense requires an equivalence relation on the underlying domain, while the variety considered here relies on a *nonreflexive, nontransitive* relation. (Indeed, it need not even be considered as symmetric, though Hegel seems to treat determinate negation as symmetric.)

paradoxical about defining an abstract relational structure of roles by such a three phase process. However, the *only* way to pick out the roles and their relations is by engaging in the process that proceeds through the recognition of the signs and their relations at the lower level. This is a sense dependence relation: what it is to be an incompatibility role (at the second level) is defined in terms of relations on signs (at the first level). The symmetric sense dependence at the second level depends on the asymmetric sense dependence of the second level on the first.

IX. Traversing the Moments: Dialectical Understanding

Here is where I think the two-level model of holistic role formation can help in understanding Hegel:

18) The process of grasping or understanding holistically identified and individuated items is what Hegel calls "*traversing the moments.*" ²²⁵

Because of the holistic character of the conceptually articulated objective determinate contents it must grasp in order to know the world as it is, consciousness must be posited in a two-fold manner: once as the restless movement [Bewegung] to and fro through all its moments [welches alle seine Momente durchläuft], aware in them of an otherness which is superseded in its own act of grasping it; and again, rather as the *tranquil unity* certain of its truth. ²²⁶

²²⁵ "Traversing" is Miller's translation of "durchlaufen"—literally, running or walking through. See for instance [M47], where Hegel says that the topic of philosophy is "existence within its own Notion. It is, and this whole movement constitutes what is positive *the process which begets and traverses its own moments* [in it] and its truth." (Emphasis added.)

²²⁶ [M237].

Understanding objective idealism requires understanding the relation between the "restless *movement* to and fro through all the moments" on the subjective side, and the *content* on the objective side that is grasped thereby.

In essence, the object is the same as the movement: the movement is the unfolding and differentiation of the two moments, and the object is the apprehended togetherness of the moments.²²⁷

What, then, are the "moments" of the holistic structure, articulated by objective, modally robust relations of exclusion and (so) inclusion, which Hegel thinks we must "traverse" in order to grasp the world as determinate? And what sort of "movement" is it that we are to perform? What do we need to *do* in order to count as "traversing the moments"? Almost everything Hegel wrote is structured by some version of this conceptual progression. In his hands, the basic thought is a flexible one, which he adapts to many disparate topics and circumstances. So it is not easy to come up with a formula that will do justice to them all. But the basic outlines of the thought are not hard to discern. We start with two "moments" or aspects that can be abstracted from a determinately contentful thought or way the world could be. These are variously characterized: identity and difference, immediacy and mediation, being-for-self and being-for-others.²²⁸

Traversing the moments is how one understands the relations between these concepts and that of determinateness according to the metaconcept of *Vernunft*. Thinking that one can *first*

²²⁷ [M111].

²²⁸ "Force is the unconditioned universal which is equally in its own self what it is *for another*; or which contains the difference in its own self—for difference is nothing else than being-*for-another*." [M136] "Being for another" is Hegel's way of talking about *relations*—in the case that matters, relations of strong exclusion.

understand the logical notions of, say, identity and difference, and *then* somehow put them together to get an adequate conception of determinateness is how one understands the relations between these concepts and that of determinateness according to the ultimately unsatisfactory and unworkable metaconcept of Verstand. "Running through" the two moments yields three stages, one corresponding to each moment, and the third to the distinctive way of understanding their combination and relation that is the goal and result of the process. What one does at each of those stages is, in Hegel's terminology, to "posit" [setzen] something determinate *as*, for instance, simply immediate being. Doing that is understanding it according to the conception of simple identity or being-for-self. "Positing X as Y" means taking or treating X as Y, understanding or representing X as Y, applying the concept Y to X, characterizing a referent X as picked out by a sense Y, specifying an extension X by means of an intension Y.²²⁹

Hegel envisages an expressively progressive transition from one construal to another of the objects of knowledge, each of which presupposes those that come before it. It can be illustrated to begin with by the course of thought we go through in understanding *properties* as holistically identified and individuated—the first category in which this point comes up. We can see our understanding of properties as comprising three stages:

A) First, one grasps the property as *immediately contentful*. It is just the thing it is, brutally there. To say that one initially understands it as objectively *immediate* is to say on the objective side that one has an *atomistic* conception of it. One takes it to be possible for that property to be what it is apart from its relations to other properties. Thus, on the subjective side, one need not

²²⁹ Hegel sometimes—I think, less happily—talks about the situation in which one posits, say, properties now as immediate and again as mediated, as one in which the same *content* (a determinate property) shows up in two different *forms*.

consider those relations or those other properties in order to *judge* that something has the property. The properties in play are restricted to *sense* universals, that is, to observable properties—those about which one can make judgments that are subjectively *immediate* in the sense of being *noninferentially* elicited in observation. These play the role of the primitively individuated *signs* at the first stage of holistic role abstraction. Thinking about these apart from the subjective incompatibility relations among those commitments is thinking about the objective world they present as itself consisting in observable states of affairs that are objectively immediate in the sense that the things presented in sensation are taken as being what they are apart from any relations among them.

This is a position that is unstable, however. For it does not include a coherent conception of what one grasps as *determinately contentful*. Beginning to make explicit what is implicit in such a conception requires moving to the next stage, by considering the next "moment". That is B) Next, one sees that the property is determinate only insofar as it *strongly differs* from other properties, excluding them in the sense that it is impossible for one object (at one time) to have two properties that are incompatible in this sense. At this point, one has moved away from considering the property in terms of its *immediate identity or unity*, to considering its *relations to, mediation by, difference or disparity from* other properties. At this stage, relations of subjective incompatibility among the commitments are considered. They present relations of objective incompatibility among the states of affairs represented by the original commitments. Doing this, Hegel says, is moving out (in thought) from the thing (here, property) into its other. Being-for-self has dissolved into being-for-others. The property is now understood exclusively

in terms of its relations to, in particular (given the relations of material incompatibility Hegel has argued articulate determinateness) its determinate strong *differences from* other properties. This is the dissolution of the original conception of the identity of properties as immediate, without yet putting in place any stable successor conception of identity. It, too, is unstable, because positing the property as—understanding it just in terms of—mediation, exclusion, relation to others puts the relations in place without yet providing the conceptual resources to make sense of the relata. This is essentially the position I gestured at above, as threatening to leave us with no ultimately intelligible conception of properties (facts, "forces", etc.) as elements in a holistic relational structure articulated by relations of determinate exclusion. Put slightly differently, the first stage asks us to understand properties as contentful independently of the relations among them: as each picked out by senses *independent* of one another. The second stage is then a strong construal of them as *reciprocally sense dependent*. But how are we to make sense of this? If none of the senses, as it were, start off as determinate, how can distinctions among them (among what?) make them determinate? The conception of reciprocal sense dependence threatens to send us around in (infinite!) circles, without making progress on determining the content of any of the senses we run through. How are we to understand the whole thing as getting off the ground? The model of holistic role abstraction tells us exactly how we must combine the first two conceptions (content as immediate and content as strongly holistic) to yield a third. We must reconceive the things we are talking about—here properties—in such a way that the immediacies that became first available are construed as *signs*, expressing a reality articulated by the relations that we first understood at the second stage. It is relations among these *roles* that can be played by what is immediate that should ultimately be understood as standing in holistic relations one to another.

C) In the final stage, then, one returns to the determinate content of the property, but now understands its *identity* as essentially *consisting* in its relations of exclusion of or difference from those it contrasts with (as well as its relations of inclusion to those it entails or that entail it). Where before one treated the determinate content as something merely *immediate*, and then as something merely *mediated*, one now grasps it as fully *mediated immediacy*.²³⁰ One sees its being-for-self as consisting in its being-for-others. Thus at this stage we construct the roles and the new relations among them, which are taken to be *expressed by* the immediacies considered in the first stage. The underlying only *theoretically* (that is *inferentially*, i.e. by mediation) accessible *reality* is *expressed by* the observationally (noninferentially, i.e. immediately) accessible *appearance*, which serves as a *sign* of it. These determinately contentful roles are constituted entirely by their relations to one another—but these are the higher-order relations induced by the lower-level relations on the signs (immediacies).

The final stage is a conception of the property as "infinite", as a holistic role with respect to relations of material incompatibility or exclusion, but one to which the immediacy of the sense universals makes an essential contribution. The subjectively immediate commitments acquired noninferentially through sense perception are now understood as presenting an objective world whose immediacy (brute thereness) is merely a *sign*, an appearance *expressing* a richly mediated determinate, and therefore holistic structure.

²³⁰ "In the consummation of the syllogism...where objective universality is no less posited as totality of the form determinations, the distinction of mediating and mediated has disappeared. That which is mediated is itself an essential moment of what mediates it, and each moment appears as the totality of what is mediated." [*Science of Logic* 703]

This is not a picture which has the immediacy as a mere sign for something *else*, a content. That would be a representational, not an expressive model. An immediacy-as-sign is imbued with the content it expresses; it shows up as itself, an immediacy *as* mediated—as it must be to be determinately contentful. The inferential and incompatibility relations that make such immediacies revelatory of *only* inferentially accessible, theoretical features of reality is not a passage *beyond* itself to something else, but only to something *implicit* (in a straightforward inferential sense) in it, in the content it has. This third stage, the holistic "infinite" conception we are ultimately aiming at, is *made* intelligible *only* by the process of arriving at it. For one must *build* the holistic roles in stages, starting with something construed as immediate, and then investigating the mediation implicit in taking it to be determinate.

Here is another of the many passages in which Hegel describes this fundamental process (and I hope by this point in our story he can be heard struggling here to say something that we can now put in somewhat clearer terms):

The movement of a being that immediately is, consists partly in becoming an other than itself, and thus becoming its own immanent content; partly in taking back into itself this unfolding [of its content] or this existence of it, i.e. in making *itself* into a moment, and simplifying itself into something determinate. In the former movement, *negativity* is the differentiating and positing of *existence*; in this return into self, it is the becoming of the *determinate simplicity*.²³¹

This "movement" is what we must rehearse in order to trace the relations that articulate the sort of determinate content Hegel calls "individuality". "Negativity" appears here in its characteristic

²³¹ [M53].

double guise: on the *objective* side, in the form of *relations* of modally robust material exclusion, and on the *subjective* side as *movement*, as the *doing* of something, the *alteration* of commitments that is the grasping and acknowledging of the significance of those relations.²³²

Looking back from the perspective achieved in *Absolute Knowledge*, Hegel sums up in this way the conception we are supposed to have:

Thus the object is in part *immediate* being, or, in general, a Thing-corresponding [entspricht] to immediate consciousness; in part, an othering of itself, its relationship or *being-for-another*, and *being-for-itself*, i.e. determinateness—corresponding to perception; and in part *essence*, or in the form of a universal—corresponding to the Understanding. It is, as a totality, a syllogism [Schluß] or the movement [Bewegung] of the universal through determination to individuality, as also the reverse movement from individuality through superseded individuality, or through determination, to the universal. **It is, therefore, in accordance with these three determinations that consciousness must know the object as itself** [emphasis added].²³³

This, then, is the framework of Hegel's idealism, providing the context in which are situated both more specific idealist claims I have suggested (concerning the relations between the concepts of singular term and object, of assertion and fact, and counterfactual reasoning and law) and the

²³² Here, as often, he talks about this movement as something that *happens*, rather than something we *do*. But that is just a way of emphasizing that all we are doing in moving this way is bringing out into the explicit light of day what is implicit in each conception we entertain. The path of the movement required to understand them is accordingly determined by the holistic, relational nature of the conceptual contents we are grasping.

²³³ [M789].

generic Hegelian reading of objective incompatibility in terms of *experience*: the process of resolving incompatible commitments. The objective world is a holistic relational structure, determinate just insofar as it is articulated by modally robust relations of material incompatibility. Such a conceptual structure is in principle intelligible only by means of a process of traversing the moments: holistic role abstraction ascending from immediacy through mediation to immediacy as expressive of purely mediated contents. The determinateness of the objective world and the structured process of grasping it are reciprocally sense dependent concepts, each intelligible only in terms of the other. So understood, objective idealism does *not* entail or involve any claims of *reference* dependence—as though our concept using activity were required to *produce*, as opposed to being required to *make intelligible*, the conceptually structured world. The thought that that world is always already there anyway, regardless of the activities, if any, of knowing and acting subjects, has always stood as the most fundamental objection to any sort of idealism. It is a true and important thought; but it is not an objection to Hegel's objective idealism, as here construed.

X. Conclusion

I have argued:

- that understanding the *objective* world as *determinate* for Hegel entails that it must be understood as a *holistic relational structure*;
- that there is a *prima facie* problem with the intelligibility of strongly holistic relational structures;

- for the strengthened Harman point, a specific kind of conceptual pragmatism, about construing the relation between objective *relations* and subjective *processes*;
- for an understanding of *idealism* as a *sense* dependence relation of objective determinateness on subjective processes of resolving incompatible commitments; and
- for an understanding of holism also as a *sense* dependence relation.

Hegel's claim is then that **the *only* way to make holism, and so determinateness, intelligible is objective idealism.**

It then remained only to say what *subjective process* can make intelligible *objective weakly holistic semantic relational structures*. For that I offer a model: *holistic role abstraction*, beginning with *signs*, and ending with *roles* played by those signs, or *contents expressed* by them, thought of in terms of higher order relations among *sets* of those signs.

So objective idealism—a sense dependence thesis relating the concept of objective holistic relational structures to the concept of a certain kind of subjective process—emerges as a response to conceptual difficulties attendant on the conception of strongly holistic relational structures. Disentangling issues of *sense* dependence from those of *reference* dependence shows idealism as a respectable and potentially defensible response to genuine conceptual problems. An unforeseen bonus of this way of approaching things is the provision of a novel (though admittedly telegraphic²³⁴) account of the *dialectical method* that structures all Hegel's

²³⁴ Particularly noticeably by its absence in this sketch is an account of how the subject's engaging in the process of revising the commitments it finds itself with in response to their material incompatibilities underwrites understanding them as presenting (representing, being about, answering for their correctness to) a world articulated by objective relations of material incompatibility. Hegel begins to tell such a story in the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology*. It is

philosophical accounts. That method responds to the need to understand holistic structures by traversing the moments, by starting with conceptions of what things are immediately or in themselves, then moving to grasp them as what they are mediately or for others, and then to understand what they are *in themselves* as constituted by what they are *for others*, as *mediated immediacy*. Not only *objective idealism*, but Hegel's distinctively structured dialectical *process of understanding* emerge as required to understand the (weakly) *holistic* relational structures that Hegel takes to be implicit in the notion of a world that is *determinately* one way rather than another. Situating a central strand of Hegel's idealism²³⁵ in this structure, it seems to me, sheds light both on his thought and on the issues he thought about.²³⁶

END

an account of how the representational dimension of concept use emerges from the process of rectifying one's commitments, about how concern with *reference* emerges from concern with *sense* and the sorts of sense dependence considered here. I tell that story elsewhere.

²³⁵ Another strand is what I call "conceptual" idealism. I understand *absolute* idealism as roughly the product of objective and conceptual idealism. Conceptual idealism is the sort discussed in my chapter "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism", under the slogan "The structure and unity of the concept is the same as the structure and unity of the self-conscious self." From the point of view of the current chapter, it is what one gets by applying the strengthened Harman point one more time, and construing subjective processes and objective relations, not as standing to each other as elements in a relational structure, but as aspects of a process. This is construing how things stand between objective relations and subjective processes, as modeled on the processes of subjects, rather than the relations of objects. It is within *this* process that the "for others" of the second stage comes to encompass relations between the objective and the subjective. But that is another story.

²³⁶ I am grateful to John McDowell for helping me to separate out distinct threads in this argument and to see just how to characterize the view I am attempting to reconstruct and attribute to Hegel.